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DR. NEWEL PERRY

and the

CALIFORNIA COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND

Newel Perry
"

THE CALIFORNIA COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND

AND OTHER ACTIVITIES OF THE BLIND, 1881-1956

an interview
conducted by Willa Baum

University of California. General Library
Regional Cultural History Project
Berkeley. 1956

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Name Dr. Newel X Perry
his mark

Emma Burnham
sister

Date JUL 31 1956

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INTRODUCTION

California, particularly the Bay Area, has been the central locale of an interesting and possibly prophetic social movement, the self-organization of blind persons to promote the idea that given proper training and job opportunities, most blind people can become self-supporting and independent, without need for further charitable services. Institutions and agencies <u>for</u> the blind, usually spearheaded by sighted persons, have had a long history which began in Europe and continued in the United States, especially on the East Coast. These agencies, either governmental or private, try to help the blind by providing a general education and educational aids such as raised type books; by teaching handcrafts; perhaps by establishing sheltered workshops where the blind may earn some money; and by providing recreational facilities. The blind admit these are worthy objectives, but some of the leaders have felt that these agencies are actually working places for do-gooders who are wedded to the idea that the blind are and must remain helpless and dependent and, indeed, that their very lack of sight makes them in some way less mentally competent than the rest of the population.

On the West Coast, a blind mathematics scholar at the University of California, Newel Perry, was

concerned about the lack of vocational opportunities for the blind and in 1898 organized a small group of alumni from the California School for the Blind to consider the problem. He became convinced that a college education was the best way to fit a blind person to compete successfully in a sighted society. Dr. Perry devoted his life to improving the economic opportunities open to the blind and especially to providing opportunities for the blind to go to college if they so desired. His small alumni group was the nucleus of the California Council for the Blind, established in 1934, which has achieved to date much progressive legislation for the blind in California. One of his students, Dr. Jacobus ten Broek, in 1940 formed the National Federation of the Blind, which does on a national scale what the California Council for the Blind does in the state. The National Federation of the Blind, with its affiliated state organizations, has become the chief spokesman of the active, vocal and independent blind of the United States.

To get the story of these developments from some of the blind leaders themselves, a series of interviews

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was conducted in the fall and winter, 1955-56, by Willa Baum as part of the work of the University of California's Regional and Cultural History Project, directed by Corinne Gilb.

The following interview with Dr. Newel Perry, chief pioneer of this movement of the organized blind, took place during several afternoons at Dr. Perry's comfortable, old-fashioned home at 2421 Woolsey Street, Berkeley, where he lives with his sister. The interviews were sandwiched in between Dr. Perry's tutoring duties--he still tutors young men in mathematics--and a trip he made to investigate conditions at the Idaho State School for the Blind.

Dr. Perry, aged 83 at the time of the interview, of average build and below-medium height, wore a neat Van Dyke beard, dressed simply but very properly, smoked his pipe almost continuously, and often paced the floor. He talked for two or more hours at a time, and if he sometimes forgot names or details, he did not forget the major problems that had concerned the blind nor the solutions he had proposed, and inasmuch as these problems still exist, he stated his present opinions definitely and with the same manner of authority and leadership that had enabled him to accomplish so much. Dr. Perry's only hesitancy in

telling his story occurred when the truth of the situation forced him to say something less than flattering about one of his former associates. Otherwise he was eager to answer the interviewer's questions.

An almost complete set of the California Council for the Blind's convention minutes and resolutions, collected by Dr. Perry since 1934, has been deposited in the office of the California Council for the Blind, Berkeley. Information concerning the National Federation of the Blind is available in their office, also in Berkeley. Other material relating to the blind in California and elsewhere is located in Lange Library and Bancroft Library, University of California, and a sizeable collection exists at the State Library in Sacramento.

Willa Baum

Regional Cultural History Project
University of California Library
Berkeley, California
25 July 1956

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EARLY CHILDHOOD

Baum: Will you tell me a little about your early childhood?

Perry: Briefly stated, I was born in Dixon near Sacramento on December 24, 1873. We were farmers, worked in the wheat fields. Our family was rather large and I was one of the younger ones. We left in '76 and went up to Shasta County and established a home on Cow Creek about six miles east of Anderson near Redding.

I lost my sight in 1881. The last day that I was at all conscious of vision was my eighth birthday, December 24, 1881. The cause of my blindness was a severe attack of poison oak. I heard the doctor tell my father that I was dangerously ill and that he must choose between trying to save my eyesight or trying to save my life and that the latter would be the wiser choice.

After many weeks of sickness during most of which time I was unconscious, I began to recover but with the definitely established fact that I was permanently blind.

I remember clearly when the day finally arrived on which I was to be permitted to get out of bed and be dressed. Many of the neighbors came to see how I would manage. There had been quite a bit of

excitement about Mr. Perry's blind boy. When I started to dress, they were all elaborating at great length on how wonderful it was that I could do this or that thing, largely, I think, to make me feel better.

When they handed me my shoes, two or three said, "Oh, you mustn't do that. You'll have to tell him which foot to put that on." Of course I put it on my foot myself. Well, I was the most wonderful being they had ever heard of. How would I know which foot to put the shoe on? Why, anyone would know. However, it pleased me and I remember very distinctly that I thought I was fooling them and I felt pretty proud of it. I never explained how I told about my shoes. I expect I was a mystery to them and I was quite willing to keep that up.

As for melancholy or heartaches or all that sort of stuff, I never had any. In fact, I received so much attention that I rather regretted that I hadn't gone blind before.

When I got up from my sickness, I felt very fine apparently and the only great change was that all my brothers and sisters went to school. I did not go. No one ever thought of asking me to go.

I wouldn't have minded going but I think I accepted the view that I could not conform to the requirements for learning anything in school. Now I think it would have been very much better if I had gone to school and I think I could have learned--that's my present opinion. Before I lost my sight, I had attended a one-room schoolhouse with pupils ranging from six to twenty years of age. I was about halfway through the first reader and I had learned to count, except I couldn't remember the number thirty.

My father's business was hauling lumber. There were a lot of saw mills up in the mountains east of Redding and the timber had to be cut, sawed up into lumber and then someone had to haul it down to the railroad at Anderson.

Baum: With a horse and wagon?

Perry: We had two wagons fastened together and eight horses driven by a jerk line. My father was inclined to keep me with him as much as he could. When we went on these trips, he would let me go along with him. The head two horses, the leaders, had bells on their shoulders and I can remember, I used to like to listen to them. He would let me ride on

I wouldn't have minded going but I think I accepted the view that I could not conform to the requirements for [illegible] [illegible] in school. Now I think it would have been [illegible] much better if I had gone to school, and I think I would have learned-- they'd [illegible] out [illegible]. [illegible] I lost my sight, I had [illegible] a [illegible] [illegible] with people reading [illegible] to [illegible]. I was [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] and I had learned to [illegible], [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the [illegible].

[illegible] [illegible]. There were [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] them to the [illegible] of [illegible].

[illegible] [illegible]

[illegible] We had two [illegible] and eight horses [illegible] by a [illegible] line. [illegible] was inclined to [illegible] with [illegible] in the [illegible]. When he went on these trips, he'd let me go along with him. The lead [illegible] horses, the leaders, had bells on their shoulders and I can remember, I used to like to listen to them. He would let me ride on

one of the wheelers, one of the rear horses. I enjoyed that very much.

My father passed away in July of 1883 from "galloping tuberculosis." He had heard of and corresponded with the people at the School for the Blind in Berkeley, California. He never told me anything about that. So arrangements were made to send me down. I came down in August of '83. I was not quite ten years old.

CALIFORNIA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF AND BLIND

Perry: As for the school, it was up here on Derby Street. Parker Street would run right into the main building. At that time the blind and the deaf children were all in the same building. There were about sixty blind children. The school was considered a school for the deaf because they had, I guess, a couple of hundred of them there. The blind were, so to speak, permitted to stay in a deaf school. They had two or three dormitories. The blind boys had two stories in one of those buildings and the blind girls lived about the same way over in their area. There would be deaf children in that same dormitory.

The life was very new and strange to me. My experiences had been out in the country, not in the city. I knew a good deal about climbing trees and robbing birds' nests and looking at ants and helping curry the horses--we had a good many horses--and that sort of thing. But I had never been in a city and it puzzled me a great deal.

We had two teachers for the blind, so two school rooms. A lady taught the lower grades and

and a gentleman, Mr. Charles Wilkinson, taught the other. They were not trained people as we speak of trained teachers now, but for some reason they were both wonderful teachers. How these two people educated all these children varying from six to nineteen or twenty has always been a mystery to me. Mr. Wilkinson had to do a great deal of individual teaching, and yet he kept us all busy. I finally got through what you would call the tenth grade now.

Baum: Was Mr. Wilkinson a relative of the principal?

Perry: He was a brother of the principal. The principal was Mr. Warring Wilkinson. Mr. Warring Wilkinson was a much better trained and educated man, but a very different type. He was strictly the administrator. Mr. Charles Wilkinson was a boy that was grown up. He was quite boyish and he was very much loved by everybody.

Baum: Did the blind students like Mr. Warring Wilkinson?

Perry: Some did, but they didn't see as much of him. He didn't have the time to give to us. I liked him very much and he took a great interest in me, more than he ever had in anybody, for some reason. I think because...the story is this way.

They decided they wanted to have a contest in arithmetic between three deaf boys and three blind boys. They tried to get the best ones they could andI was one of the blind boys. Arithmetic came easy to me. One of the teachers of the deaf was going to put a problem of multiplication on the board and read it at the same time and we were to raise our hands when we were ready to give the answer. He said, "Multiply 297 by 368." That quick, I gave the answer. A great many of them thought that was very strange; they began to think that I knew what the example was before I came in. It was very simple. 297 is 300 minus 3, so all I had to do was to multiply by 3 twice, first to get 300 times 368 and then subtract 3 times 368 from the first answer.

Well, that not only puzzled the boys but the teachers got all excited. They all thought that I was a wonder and I didn't tell them how I did it. I thought I was getting a lot of glory and the less I talked, the more glory I was getting.

Do you understand what I did?

Baum: Yes. I think they teach the children in school now to do that.

Perry: Yes, I've always taught them to do that way.

Well, that established me as a great mathematician. Numbers did come very easily to me. I did not take much interest in English.

These three or four of us who were getting along to the tenth grade used to try to figure out what we were going to do when we grew up. Older people think that children don't think very much, but I think they are very much mistaken, particularly about children who are problems like we were. How could a blind person make a living? None of us ever heard of a blind man making a living. The subject of what we were going to do was avoided, avoided by me because I knew that if I had sprung any of the hopes I had on any of the adults they would have at once told me that that was impossible. I knew that so I decided to keep my ideas to myself. I didn't know what I was going to do and I was wondering, but I never felt that my case was hopeless.

Baum: Do you remember who the other boys were?

Perry: One was Cecil Smith, the son of a very prominent lawyer at that time. The two main lawyers of California were this Mr. Smith and Judge Garber.

Cecil Smith was quite a bright boy, but he had many advantages. His father was successful and considered very wealthy. He had a home here in Oakland and everybody in his family were devoting a great deal of attention to Cecil. They evidently read to him just constantly. He knew of authors and books I'd never heard of. But he had no sense for mathematics.

John Coffee was a boy who had lost his sight after he was about 14 or 15 and had come to the school rather recently. The things that I liked, he didn't, and the things he liked I didn't care for. He was very good at English, but he didn't know anything about math.

So because they were poor at mathematics, they also thought I was a wonder.

The three of us would sit up at night and talk over what a blind person could do and whether we could go to college. We'd never heard of a blind person going to college. We thought we'd get some information so we concocted a letter and sent a copy of it to the superintendents of the state school for the blind in all the different states and told them our age and what we had done and

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supposed that they, being the principals of these schools for the blind, would have a good many ideas. We told them we'd thought of going to college and wanted to know if they thought it was possible and desirable.

I think half of them answered and none of them told us they thought the idea of college was good and advised us to go ahead and try it. Several said, "Don't try it." One of them said, "You would be educating yourself only for a life of discontent," meaning, of course, if we did get through the university and we couldn't do anything, we'd be in an awful fix. Maybe we'd be better off if we stayed ignorant.

Baum: What did they suggest you do?

Perry: Well, some of them said that some blind people had worked in shops where they made brooms and the blind could do that, but otherwise they gave us no suggestions at all and I don't think they had any.

A few years after I came to Berkeley someone had urged the legislature to create a home for adult blind people in Oakland. The idea was that they could have shops and could earn some money.

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A good many blind came to it, but it was run by people who didn't know anything about it. It was a state job; the heads of it had never seen blind people before. The men who came were ignorant blind people who had been wandering around the world begging. In those days, most blind people had to beg unless they came from a family that could supply their means for them. Oh, if you walked down Broadway or Telegraph Avenue, there would be a blind man with a fiddle on almost every street corner and he'd play and hope someone would give him a nickel.

Baum: Did the school expect the students to learn to play the fiddle and go into that way of making a living?

Perry: No, I don't think the school thought a great deal about it. They had a good teacher in music, but what he thought they were going to do with that music later to earn a living, I don't know. They all preached that we must never beg, what a disgraceful thing it was. But they never told us what we could do outside of begging. They did not assume the task of working out the problem of what a blind man can do after you've educated him, and at that time education meant a limited education.

Library

What they did was when he reached the age when he was no longer eligible to stay at school, they'd accompany him down to the gate and tap him on the shoulder and say, "Good luck to you," and never hear of him again for ten or fifteen years. The schools took it for granted that their responsibility was to teach them a few academic things and then send them home, and to try to make their life while they were there quite happy, which they did. I think we all had lots of fun with one another. I don't know as we thanked the teachers particularly for it. We would play all sorts of games and climb the hills and the mountains around there.

In later years I got a bill through the Legislature creating the position of a placement worker at the School. His job, and I wanted it to be his only job because I wanted him to give a hundred percent of his time to it, was to go out and interview all sorts of businessmen and possible employers and get the employer interested in taking on a blind boy. I got it through finally and Mr. Robert Campbell...do you know him?

Baum: Yes, I met him down at the California Council office.

Perry: He was the first placement officer. He had graduated

at the school and he took that position. He did very, very well at it.

I remember, it wasn't long after that that a boy came into my class up there and said he wanted to say goodbye to me. I said, "Why, where are you going? What's the matter?" He said, "Well, I'm leaving. I got a job. I'm going to work Monday morning." Mr. Campbell had gotten him a job, of all things, working in a garage.

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PERRY ATTENDS PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL

Baum: You attended Berkeley High School, didn't you?

Perry: Yes. It was in 1890, I guess. Mr. Wilkinson thought it would be a good thing to try the experiment of putting a blind boy in the public high school, so he wanted to send me.

Baum: How did he decide to send you?

Perry: I mentioned that I was very good in math and as they only had two teachers, they had me teaching the other children in mathematics in the afternoons. I enjoyed my history, math and chemistry, but spelling and English bored me to death. That annoyed Mr. Charles Wilkinson.

One afternoon Mr. Wilkinson kept me after class and gave me quite a long lecture because I wouldn't study my Latin word roots. The principal came along and heard our discussion. Well, I got very excited and sort of broke down and said that the point was that I wanted to go to college. So the next day Mr. Charles Wilkinson said to me, "I'm very glad my brother came along and saw that scene you put on, because it made it very clear to him that you were really interested." He added

that they would discontinue my helping the other children in the afternoons so that I could devote more time to my studeis. Later in the term the principal asked what I would think about going down to the public high school. Of course, that's what I wanted anyhow. Then during the summer I received a notice from him saying that I should come back...

Baum: You went home in the summer?

Perry: I had no home, but I'd go up to my uncle's farm and hang around...And he said that I was to come down at an earlier date, two or three weeks earlier, so that I could enroll in the high school. So that's how it started. I was allowed to live at the School and go down to the high school each day. The high school was not where it is now; it was on Center Street between Oxford and Telegraph. It was very small. In 1892--I took two years there--I think twelve of us graduated. I enjoyed it tremendously.

Baum: Did any other students from the School for the Blind attend with you?

Perry: No. It had never been tried. Yet, when I went down to high school, I had no particular trouble except the first few days. I think the teachers were a little bit alarmed and uneasy.

I remember, they put me into a geometry class. The teacher just never called on me, never paid any attention. I gathered that she had thought that she would have to give a great deal of attention to me and additional work, and I think she didn't like it. I guess she thought that if she ignored me, I wouldn't be able to keep up with the class and would give it up. I couldn't understand it otherwise. It just happened that I was good at math and knew lots more about it than the other pupils did. She didn't know very much about it. In a little while I began to interrupt them. A boy would go to the board to solve a problem... we used to call them "originals." I don't think they do so much of that anymore. If he made a mistake, I would protest. That, of course, surprised them a good deal. Then the situation changed, and they changed their attitude. We were supposed to bring in the solution to these originals every day. Geometric problems were given for us to prove, and with no proof given in the book, we had to work out the proof. It wasn't any time until the boys... when I'd reach Center Street in the morning and turn that corner, there was always a bunch of

geometry boys around the gate near the school, waiting there with their books out for me to come and help them. (laughter). Then the teacher became very nice to me; in fact, they all did.

Baum: Did you get any help at the school? At night, when you went back to the School for the Blind?

Perry: Not at night, as we have now. That was later. They did finally give me a reader, a man who would read a couple of hours a day to me. Giving me a reader was a sort of special arrangement. It wasn't part of the system. I think the boys that came after me, the boys and girls, got this service. I don't think they had any financial help at that time.

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Baum: Did Mr. Wilkinson encourage you to go on to college? After you finished high school?

Perry: Oh yes. I was two years in the high school. I wanted to get out in one year, but I'm glad the principal urged me to take two years before trying college. Then they awarded me a scholarship. Of course I couldn't stay at the school anymore, after I had graduated from high school. They gave me a scholarship of $500 a year.

Baum: The School for the Blind did?

Perry: Yes. And that meant that it was up to me to live on $500 a year. That would have been almost impossible. That meant I had to pay my board and lodging, clothe myself, and also find a reader and pay him. What would happen would be that you'd have to cut down on your reader money. The first thing I knew, I was tutoring other pupils, college students.

Baum: Professors at the University got you this job?

Perry: No, I got it on my own.

Baum: Maybe the students heard about your ability?

Perry: Oh yes, some of them. A fellow who was afraid he couldn't pass his exams would want to be coached. Finally I did too much of it. I feel it is a mistake for a boy in college to do what I did, spend so much time earning money, because he will neglect his studies. He will get less out of his college training. But with the means that I had, I practically had to tutor. I got $50 a month for ten months, and by the time I'd paid my board and bought necessary clothing, I didn't have anything left. And I enjoyed coaching very much. Everybody knew me; I even advertised. Coaching was much more necessary then than it is now.

I took part in most all the things that were going on with the students. I went to the "rushes." They were an old institution in my day. Every year, at the end of the year, the freshmen went through the process of burying an old mathematical book.

A habit of the two classes, the freshmen and the sophomores, was for one to bother the other.

Baum: That's still a habit.

Perry: They went to extremes then. I think they have stopped that. We had fireworks and parades. The

freshmen would parade and the sophomores would try to stop them. All during the year they were doing that. Why, I've had boys come and wake me up at two o'clock in the morning and tell me to hurry up and get up, there were a lot of sophomores up on the hill near Grizzly Peak and they were going to do so and so and it was our job to go up there with some ropes and tie them up and pile them up in a pile, if we could, and they would try to do the same thing to the other. That was called "rushing them."

The University tried to stop it then, but it didn't succeed. I understand they have practically done away with it later. It became somewhat dangerous.

And they would have a mob when they had that affair at the end of the year. It would be like turning the visitors to a football game down on the campus all at once, to stand around and watch the struggle. We had a lot of fun. I don't know as we hurt anyone much. I suppose there were a few cases, but it looked as though it could be dangerous.

Baum: Do you think the students in the colleges were brighter than the students in the colleges now?

Perry: Well, they worked more. Of course, some bright students in the colleges work now too, but you don't have to, you can get by without it.

Baum: But you had to work when you went to college.

Perry: We had to or they would mark us way down.

Baum: Did you have any particularly outstanding professors in the University?

Perry: Yes, the head of the mathematics department was a very brilliant man, Irving Stringham. I took a great deal of work with Stringham.

And Mellen W. Haskell was a very brilliant man.

Baum: Did they encourage you to go into mathematics? Did they think that would be a good profession for a blind person?

Perry: I never asked them.

Baum: They didn't discourage you?

Perry: No. They were very nice to me. They had no idea what I was going to do. I never discussed it with them. They wouldn't have known what to tell me. Of course I was a novelty, a blind boy in college.

Another professor I took particular interest in was the head of the department of philosophy, George H. Howison. A very, very brilliant man.

Of course we didn't have as many professors as you have now, but we had some good men. We had the LeConte brothers, a geologist and a physicist, both very brilliant men.

I didn't take much interest in their so-called courses on education.

Baum: Who were the teachers?

Perry: Mr. Elmer E. Brown; he's supposed to have been a pretty good man. I guess he was. He was finally appointed to the head of the Department of Education by Congress. Not a cabinet member, subordinate to someone who was. They used to switch them around from one department to another.

Baum: How come you took education courses? Were you planning to become a teacher?

Perry: Oh, I didn't take many. One--oh, I guess more than one. To kill time, I guess. I thought I might learn something but I didn't. They started me out, I remember, on the history of education. It wasn't a bad course except they could have told you in a month as much as they took the whole semester to do. That rather disgusted me and I've never been able to work up any great zeal on this education stuff.

Baum: Was mathematics your main subject?

Perry: Yes, it was my chief interest and I took more of it than anything else.

I went to Stringham one day and thought I'd raise a question with him as to whether I'd ever get a chance at teaching mathematics. I was surprised. He said he didn't see why I shouldn't. He didn't see why there'd be any particular difficulty if I knew my math. That surprised me because I would have suspected he might be a little bit like the fellow in German that I walked in.. did I tell you that?

Baum: No.

Perry: When I was a freshman, I went in to the head of the German Department, Dr. Albin Putzker, and I said to him that I wanted to be enrolled in his German class and study German. He said, "Oh no, you are making a mistake. That would be a great mistake. A blind person can't learn German." Why, I almost laughed in his face, it sounded so utterly silly. There have been a great many blind people who have been famous linguists and he must have known that. I think it was the same thing as the way my geometry teacher in high

school thought, that he would have to give me special attention.

I just walked upstairs and walked in to another professor of German and told him I wanted to be in his class and he said, "Sure, come along. I'll be glad to have you."

I thought maybe that would be Stringham's way, but he had known me pretty well by that time. He said nothing at all discouraging. So I got playing with the idea. By that time they all knew that I was coaching, largely in mathematics. It wasn't such a novelty to them.

When I graduated they appointed me, and Stringham was the man who did it, a Fellow in Mathematics.

Baum: Was that like a teaching assistant now?

Perry: Yes, I had classes to teach, but I don't think they paid me anything. But separate from that they had given me a scholarship of $300, I think. When I got through college I had used all my scholarship from the School for the Blind. So my first year after graduation was a tough one for me. I enjoyed the teaching.

Some other fellow was trying to get a scholarship and he wanted me to divide mine with him.

Baum: Was he another blind boy?

Perry: No, no. He became a prominent professor at college. Well, I foolishly gave it to him. So I had only $150 a year, taught three different classes, I think, for which I received nothing. It meant, of course, that I simply had to go out and earn money, so I was forced to devote a great deal of time to tutoring. More than I should have because mathematics isn't play. You have to work or else leave it alone. But I don't know what else I could have done.

Then, at the end of that year they advanced me to an assistant,which was a regular job. The following year they paid me $1,000, I think, and made me an instructor and in the last year that I was there, before I left for Europe, I still ranked as an instructor, but I remember I was admitted to the Academic Senate in '99. That was my fourth year after graduation. Of course, all that time I had to tutor and study at the same time.

Baum: Was it hard on your health, do you think?

Perry: Oh no. Didn't bother me that way. It was simply that time that I should have been spending in

advancing my studies in mathematics, I was coaching somebody. Coaching was not a bad business then. It's no good now.

In those days wealthy people might have a boy who didn't study in high school and he got to be a senior and found that he couldn't get a recommend and of course, his mama and his dad wanted him to go to college and by that time he wanted to go too. So they would come largely to me to coach him for the examinations to be admitted. The opportunity to make money wasn't bad at all.

Baum: Did it pay well?

Perry: Yes, it paid very good. I guess I coached more than anybody else and could have, I guess, devoted my time entirely to coaching and made my living that way.

I remember I went to Chicago in 1899 for a summer session. They went on the principle of four sessions a year and the summer session was somewhat like the one here, largely former graduates who came back to the department of education to hear some more about pedagogy. At Chicago they had a very fine department of mathematics. I think it was the best in the country. I preferred it, I

think, to Harvard. At any rate, I went there.

Baum: Did you know Phoebe Hearst while you were in college?

Perry: Yes. She took quite an interest in me. When I went to Europe, she gave me quite a check to meet the expenses of living over there. I had a letter from her a couple of months before she died. She was a wonderful woman.

B aum: Apparently she was interested in sending blind people to school.

Perry: I don't know how much. She got interested in me, I think, through Mr. Wilkinson.

Baum: By the time you had been in college four years and then graduate work, were other blind students beginning to follow you?

Perry: Yes, not many.

Baum: Didn't Raymond Henderson and his brother go to the University here?

Perry: Well, they both went to the high school. I got them to go to the high school.

Baum: Were they younger than you were?

Perry: Yes. They were younger. By that time I was in a position to do more for them than I could have done earlier. I remember getting Raymond to go to the high school and I remember that I used to have quite a hard time to get the blind boys to go out with the sighted boys more. You know, blind people are sensitive, most of them. Finally, after I got him down to the high school, I kept after him until he finally took part in athletics. He could see a little bit so that when it came to running on a track he could run as well as any of them. He'd have all sorts of excuses to stay away. He didn't have the costume. I remember buying one for him the day before I left for Europe. And I got

him a sort of a scholarship up here at the School.

He entered the University after I had gone to Europe. He graduated in the regular four year term.

Henderson was an able man, and he worked under great hardships. He had no money of his own and found it difficult to make money somehow. He was no salesman.

Baum: Raymond Henderson was an attorney, wasn't he?

Perry: Yes.

Baum: He was Executive Director of the National Federation for a while?

Perry: Henderson? No, I don't think so.

Baum: Was he active in the Council?

Perry: Yes. Not at the beginning. When I came back here in 1912 to take charge of the Blind Department of the Berkeley School for the Blind, Henderson, who was a graduate from the University then, was a very pessimistic, discouraged man. He said to me, "You're making an awful mistake." You see, I had helped him get into college, through high school. He said, "It's all nonsense. No good. University isn't worth it. Best thing to do is burn it down." He said, "Your idea of sending these boys to college is ridiculous. You should make piano

tuners out of some and teach some others to make brooms, but this higher education is nonsense." He was a great friend of mine, but he was just giving me his frank opinion.

He came out and rang my bell a few years later. He said, "I'm here to apologize." He had become convinced, from what he saw happening to these boys, that I was doing just exactly the right thing.

Baum: Had he become a success himself?

Perry: In a way, but he was not a financial success. He became interested in the labor movement and would work for no pay, for unemployed people. An idealist. Something of a Socialist.

Perry: He never gave himself a chance to make any money.

Baum: He was a smart enough lawyer, wasn't he?

Perry: Oh, very brilliant lawyer. Won his cases. But he was not sufficiently selfish to be a success; he was....well, loads of us do that. Get interested in helping people and you forget to do things for yourself.

Baum: Did you and he have political arguments?

Perry: Oh yes. We didn't agree at all.

Baum: You said he was a Socialist.

Perry: Yes. All sorts of theories that appeal to people.

I don't know why he should fall for it, because he was a bright man, and he was sorry for me because I didn't have more sense. He said I had no understanding of social problems. Of course, I never would argue with him, and I'd say, "Maybe you're right," and he'd go on. He thought capitalism was a wicked thing. I think in his last few years he lost some of his zeal for Socialism.

HUGH BUCKINGHAM

Perry: Another one was Hugh Buckingham. He's a wonderful fellow. He doesn't have very good health now. He was idolized by everybody. Everyone likes him. They call him "Buck."

Baum: When did he start to college?

Perry: I think he graduated in 1907.

Baum: So he went after you had gone to Europe.

Perry: Yes, he remembered me when he had been a little boy.

Baum: He's the man who is going to write a biography of you.

Perry: Yes, he started to write one. I suppose he isn't well enough to put much energy into it. He's a beautiful writer, but he's not very energetic. His health has never been good.

He tells me he remembers when I'd walk into the School up there and he was a little child six or seven years old. I had a big dog and he likes to tell me that he knows all about that dog.

Baum: Were you rather a symbol of success to the students at the School?

Perry: Yes, I guess they all thought so. I was sort of lionized a great deal more than I had any occasion for. I suppose for being the first one to try going to college. I was doing something that people thought couldn't be done.

Baum: I understand you rode a bicycle around the Bay?

Perry: (laughter) Yes.

Baum: Was that later?

Perry: It was while I was in college. A fellow and I rode down to San Jose and back. He put a little bell so that when the spokes of his wheel struck it it tingled, which enabled me to know where he was. I could guide myself by him. I could go alongside of him or behind him as I pleased but that little bell told me where I was. I remember we rode down to San Jose on this side and back on the other side, up to San Francisco. Oh my, they thought I was as wonderful as Eisenhower. I don't know why it should have been harped on so much.

COLLEGE CHUMS

Baum: Who were your special friends in college?

Perry: One that was very close was a man who after graduation disappeared and I've never heard of since. His name was Gilbert Walker. Nice fellow and rather brilliant, a little lazy, I think. I was very fond of him. He went East and I've never heard of him since. I've tried to hunt him up.

The Drews, two brothers. John Drew and Bill Drew. They were great friends of mine. Bill Drew became principal of one of the high schools in San Francisco. John Drew ran a private school of his own over in San Francisco.

I had a chum by the name of Powell, Walter Powell. He and I went to high school together and were great chums all the way through high school and college.

The one I was closest to of any was Charlie Delany. We were chums at high school and through college and we've been very close all through life. He died maybe four years ago. He became an engineer, worked in the East and finally came here and worked for the P.G. and E.

Oh, all the people I was chums with have passed away. In fact, I guess there are very few of the class of 1896 still living.

MRS. PERRY

Baum: When did you meet Mrs. Perry?

Perry: You mean the first time? We went to college together.

Baum: Oh, is that right!

Perry: We both belonged to the class of '96. I saw her in New York a lot. Her folks would go back and forth to Europe a good deal; her father had interests in New York, so they lived in New York for a good many years. But we weren't married till I came back to California.

Baum: What was her maiden name?

Perry: Her father, who died when she was a very young child, his name was Unna. Her mother remarried. My wife often went by her stepfather's name to please him, because they were very devoted.

Baum: What did she study at the University?

Perry: Languages, a great deal. She was quite interested in Greek.

Baum: Where did she live when she was at the University?

Perry: San Francisco.

Baum: What was her first name?

Perry: Lillian. Called herself Lily. I never could get her to stick to one name...Kalman was the other

last name she used, her stepfather's name. Lilly Unna Kalman. She got an M.A. in '98.

Baum: Was that in languages too? Greek?

Perry: That was in languages. I've forgotten just what it was; might have been German, because I know Professor Putzker of the University was interested in her thesis. Putzker was head of the German Department.

Baum: What was Mr. Kalman's business?

Perry: He really was a wine merchant. He was always going to Paris and so on to buy the different wines. He had some men who could taste the wine and tell you what it's going to be like so many years hence. Once at the St. Louis Fair, 1903, someone gave Mr. Kalman some wine to taste, and he guessed within a mile where the grapes grew, on the Rhine River in Germany.

Baum: Did Mrs. Perry work before you were married? Teach languages?

Perry: Yes, she did some. I started a sort of private school in Berkeley, while I was a student and while I was a graduate student. She joined me there and taught languages, mostly Latin. Later, she, her mother and stepfather, all went to Europe a lot,

and they lived in New York. Then in 1912 we were planning to get married, and I came back to California, and she came a couple of months later and we were married in April, 1912. She passed away in '35.

Baum: Did you have any children?

Perry: No, no children.

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION OF SELF-SUPPORTING BLIND

Baum: In our last interview we got as far as your trip to Europe but we didn't cover the organization of the Alumni Association of Self-Supporting Blind.

Perry: Do you want to hear about that?

Baum: Yes, that is what I'm especially interested in.

Perry: All right. While I was in college, of course I spent a good deal of time thinking about what I was going to do when I got through and a great many of the boys who had been in the school would come to me to tell their stories and what they'd like to do andhow they were unable to do it apparently and so forth.

Baum: Why did they come to you, Dr. Perry? Because you had gotten through college?

Perry: I don't know. They had gotten into the habit, I suppose, at the school. All the children at the school came to me for some reason or another. And the other people in the school, the people in authority, took it for granted...some boy would come and want to know if he couldn't go downtown this afternoon and I would hear them tell him, "Well, if you get Perry to go down with you, it's all right."

Baum: Was this when you were still a student at the school?

Perry: Yes, this was when I was a child myself, like they were.

Baum: People just naturally looked to you for advice?

Perry: Well, of course I had remarkable ability in getting about. I developed that ability to get about shortly after I went blind, on the old ranch. I was running around, and I usually went on a run instead of a walk. The people got used to it.

At any rate, if they had a row, the children, if one bunch was bothering another they would come to me in their complaints. They wanted me to stop those. They always had an idea...they assumed somehow that I had authority. I didn't.

Baum: So when you were in college, boys came to you for advice?

Perry: Yes, those who had graduated and left school would come about and see me, really for advice. I don't know as I had very much to give them, but I got the idea from it that it was quite a problem, not only to myself, but evidently to all of them. That convinced me that it was very essential for blind people to get all the education they can get.

I noticed those people who had left school and had no advanced education, and that was practically

all of them, were at a loss. They would go home and sit around and hope something would happen, but it never does.

In most homes, the blind person is discouraged from doing things. Well, my dad always wanted me to be careful. I mustn't go here or there. I must stay away from the well and all that sort of stuff. Of course, that stimulated me to go all the more. I think my chief merit was that I never felt bound to do what he told me. In a little while they gave it up; they quit telling me I shouldn't do this and the other because they saw me do it. After awhile it got so they would tell me there were some horses out there in the barn hadn't been curried this morning and would I go out and curry them. At first they wouldn't have dared let me go to the barn alone, around the horses.

So I always advise blind children not to obey their parents because they never get anywhere if they do. The only ones that acquire the ability to get about are those who simply go and do it, which is always against the advice and instructions of their superiors.

Baum: These people you got together in the Alumni Association must have been the group who had more confidence.

Perry: They were out of School; they were graduated. I got what I could. Yes, they were mature people and they didn't even take the thing seriously. In the first place, they were afraid that if they had an alumni association, the School authorities would object, which was true. School authorities were in those days afraid of the organized blind.

Baum: Oh, they were?

Perry: Well, they were afraid they would spread criticism and would be a source of trouble, which wasn't altogether groundless. They probably would have, because the children, after they got out of school, began to wonder why they didn't do this or that and why someone didn't help them. There was no one to help them. The School wasn't equipped to help them as alumni. They probably should have been, but they weren't.

Baum: You called your association one of self-supporting blind. Were all the members earning their own livings?

Perry: They were all people who were trying to do something, that is, the principal ones. There was a man,

Mr. Hull, a totally blind man, who ran an express company. He had started it himself down here in Oakland. There was one boy who was quite a musician, in fact, quite a wonderful musician as a child. He taught the violin and piano and different things and also played at concerts. His name was Henry Foster.

There was a man, Daniel Weider, who was really employed at this home down in Oakland that had started, and he not only made brooms and all that, but he also kept the machinery in order. He was quite a mechanic. An ambitious fellow. He had wanted to go to college--that was before my time--but no one would help him. He was always bitter about that.

There was another fellow who had left school. He had some sight. He had ability as a dramatist, acting. He liked to do it and he was a source of a great deal of pleasure to everybody. His name was George Calvert. He finally went ahead and joined theatrical groups and traveled around the country with the rest of them. He was very much liked, a very popular fellow.

Bancroft Library

But when I came along and told them that I wanted them to form an organization, they at once had this fear that the School would object. I said, "Well, what could they do in their objection? How can they bother you? They don't know where you are or how you're living. They don't know anything about you."

Oh, they were afraid of that. They said, "Yes, the School, if they objected to it they could hurt us." It's a strange idea but they had that fear in their minds. And in fact, the schools usually advised the children in those days, when they left school, not to see much of other blind people in any kind of club or organization. Keep away from them. So I had that to contend with. The general expression about my idea was, with perfect good nature but with considerable frankness, "That's one of Newel Perry's crazy ideas."

Of course, I contended that if the blind were ever going to get anywhere they'd have to do it themselves and this sitting around waiting for Santa Claus to come doesn't work. But the idea was new to them and they were very timid.

However, they would come and we'd have a party and coffee and cake and argue about this, that, and

the other thing and they rather enjoyed it. So we started planning then.

In the first place, we wanted higher education, which we didn't have anywhere. Next, we wanted opportunities for remunerative employment, which of course meant that it would require a great deal of state legislation. That meant we must think up what we wanted, put it in the form of a resolution or something, take it to a member of the legislature, and work for it.

Baum: Was there any state legislation at that time for the blind?

Perry: Well, none such as it is now. Of course, the State School was a state institution that was created way back in the '60's. But there was nothing done beyond the elementary education. The problem of a child's future when he left the School was a blank. Nobody had any idea or took any particular interest in it, largely because they simply didn't think it was practical or possible. That is still quite prevalent.

This problem was before us so we called a meeting in Oakland at one of their homes and we had quite a crowd. Some came just out of curiosity, a

few got interested in it, and the others came for a little social amusement. Then, others began to talk about wanting to go to college, the younger people. I remember, we got a good deal of advertising in the papers. A lady reporter, I think her name was Darling...she was a graduate of the University with very high honors, came and called on me and gave us a write-up in the Bulletin, I think a Saturday Bulletin, a few days after we had that meeting in Oakland. I imagine it was in 1898. Well, the thing grew quite a bit. I had quite a crowd.

Baum: Were you president of this association?

Perry: I guess so. I've kind of forgotten. At any rate, if I wasn't president nominally I was anyhow because they'd all leave it to me. I was the only one who had such crazy ideas and they weren't as crazy as I was.

Baum: About how many members were there then?

Perry: I think we had about 25 to 30.

Baum: And they were all self-supporting?

Perry: I wouldn't say they were all exactly self-supporting. They were all earning something and some were quite successful and others were not so much so.

Baum: That was a pretty good number, don't you think, for that day?

Perry: Well, it was. Of course, others were people who had come along and were not particularly promising and we didn't expect much of anything from them.

EUROPE AND A PH.D.

Perry: In 1900 I left and went to Europe to get my Ph.D. I went to Göttingen and decided that wasn't what I wanted and went down to Zurich, Switzerland, and stayed there for one semester. Then I left and went to Munich and took one semester and then I got my degree, my Ph.D. in mathematics. I liked Munich very much.

Baum: Did you come into contact with any blind groups in Europe?

Perry: Yes, the only thing I could see that they were doing, some of them had studied music and could play and some of them had positions playing the organ for churches. I saw quite a number of those in Switzerland and everywhere. The blind seemed to be able to fill those positions and the people would accept it, but outside of that I didn't see them doing much of anything. Some of them had institutions where the adult blind could go, run perhaps by the government, sometimes by charity, but largely by the government. They would teach them how to make brooms and brushes and things of that kind, which is what they do down here in Oakland at this adult institution.

(Brings over a clothes brush to show.)
When I was in Munich a blind man in an institution made this for me.

Baum: You mean this brush is over 50 years old?

Perry: He made that in 1901.

Baum: That's a good brush.

Perry: Yes. He gave it to me as a present, sort of. I had no idea it would last as long as it has.

Baum: Were there any organized blind groups in Europe? Had the blind people thought of getting together for their own benefit?

Perry: No. Once in awhile the government would hold a sort of convention, an international one sometimes. While I was in Zurich they had a convention in Paris. The blind went to it. Of course, they didn't get it up; the teachers in institutions and so forth got it up. The blind people could come.

Baum: Was it mainly just social?

Perry: Well, largely. The different superintendents of the different institutions would tell what they were doing and so forth. There was nothing very constructive coming out of it, due to the fact that the blind people didn't have much to do with it. They weren't encouraged to have much to do with it.

Timidity holds blind people back. It did more then than now. They've rather outgrown that timidity, many of them at least, so we now have blind people who can do their own talking.

Baum: Did you think at that time that Europe was ahead or behind the United States in opportunities for the blind?

Perry: Well, really, neither of them had any opportunities for the blind. There had been a history of the development of the blind which had been developed in Europe but I think we had passed them by my time.

When I was in Germany, I had a friend who had a chemist shop. He asked me about myself and my life, and I told him how I had been brought up in California, how my family lost their money and was broken up, how I went to the blind school, how I got to go to Germany to study. He was very quiet when I finished; then he said, "It couldn't happen in Germany." He didn't quite dare say he didn't believe me, or maybe he was too polite. After that, he quit meeting me for dinner. I began to wonder what was wrong. Then it dawned on me that he was insulted; I had insulted his intelligence by telling him seriously an unbelievable yarn that you might tell

as a bedtime story to children. I don't blame him; any other German would have felt the same way. Even without the blindness element, it was quite a story because of the special American conditions. A boy born in poverty in Germany has no way of getting out of it. Well, they're improving now, but they didn't have. I should have stopped to think.

Baum: You just told him the truth without thinking.

Perry: What a fool I was! I don't blame him at all for not believing me.

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TUTORING IN NEW YORK

Perry: When I came back from Europe, I was very much impressed with New York. It's such a wonderful city, and financially speaking, it was the center of the country; now it's the financial center of the world. They can do so many things so easily. They could go out and collect $100,000 where we would collect $100 in those days.

So I decided that instead of coming back here I would stop and try my luck in New York. I tutored people for entrance to the universities, boys who had not been good students when they were in the high schools and they found when they got to be seniors they weren't equipped to go to college and they wanted to go to college. They'd want a private tutor. I also tutored the students at Columbia, the engineering students who had not been properly trained before entering college.

Baum: Was that mainly in mathematics?

Perry: Mathematids, yes.

Baum: I heard you also tried the insurance business.

Perry: I sold insurance, personal insurance and then I tried insuring livestock.

I heard you like typed descriptive literature.

Baum: Insuring livestock!

Perry: Started a little company on it, in fact. And sold it out. I didn't do very much on either of them; I was principally interested in tutoring.

Baum: So the insurance business wasn't very much?

Perry: No. I made some money at it, but I was not primarily interested in it. It tended to take my time away from tutoring.

Baum: Also, I heard you had a mail-order fortune-telling business, where you could tell if an unborn child was going to be a boy or a girl.

Perry: Oh no! That was sprung on me as a joke by somebody. We talked a lot about it and--Columbia law students used to argue about it.

Baum: Argue about whether it could be done?

Perry: About whether it was legal. Everyone I've spoken to thinks it would be. I've told about it as a joke very often.

We thought of advertising, sending letters to people, enclosing a questionnaire, and charging a dollar for a prediction. If we were wrong, we would refund the dollar. The questionnaire was to make it more mysterious. One would be bound to be right some of the time, and that would be a dollar earned.

Baum: Did you think it was legal?

Perry: No, but the law students thought it would be. I think the Postmaster General has the authority to stop undesirable mail.

It was just a lot of fun to discuss it.

Baum: Did you ever take any courses at Columbia?

Perry: No.

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF WORKERS FOR THE BLIND

Baum: I was told that you had taken part in the organization of the American Association of Workers for the Blind back in 1905. Could you tell me about that?

Perry: Yes. I'm a life member of that organization now.

Baum: That split off from the American Association of Instructors for the Blind, didn't it?

Perry: No, I don't think it had much to do with the Instructors, or at least, it never did in my mind. I never took much interest in the Instructors. The Instructors were chiefly state officials of the schools and they really had very little, as far as I could see, to contribute. My impression has always been that the teachers in the schools know very little about the real problems of the blind and take little interest.

Baum: What was the purpose of this Association of Workers for the Blind?

Perry: It was intended to be an organization largely of the blind, a realization that they should solve their own problems and not wait for state agencies. All our progress has been in spite of the opposition of the state agencies.

Baum: Was this association made up mainly of blind persons?

Perry: Yes, largely.

Baum: It's not any more, is it?

Perry: It has a great many sighted in it; it includes anyone who works for the blind. The elected officers are blind. The A.A.W.B. was a good effort and has accomplished a great deal. They are very active now, and they rather resent the efforts of the National Federation of the Blind. I think they are a little jealous; all the agencies are. The governmental agencies, either federal or state, like to advertise themselves as doing so much for the blind, but they really do very little progressive. The fact that they are government officials intimidates them and they hesitate to go to the legislatures and Congress harping on new legislation.

No one on the California Council or in the National Federation gets any remuneration, so the only people we get are those who are genuinely interested and who are willing to go out and campaign and propagandize.

I think the A.A.W.B. has improved because of our National Federation and our state councils and they have gotten over some of their initial

opposition to us. In many ways they are doing the same things the state councils are doing, except they don't like to encourage the blind to express themselves. The agencies like to take all the credit, but they can't do that so much any more because there's propaganda being published by the blind that calls their bluff, so they are now taking an interest in legislation.

Baum: Are most of the A.A.W.B. members sighted?

Perry: Oh, about half, but the leaders are blind.

Baum: You'd think they'd go right along with the Federation then, and be members of it.

Perry: No. They are largely employees of the agencies, or hope they will be, and the state agencies discourage progressive things. So they were utterly amazed that any blind people had the courage to get up and say what they wanted. Of course, it is our assumption that the only people who really understand blindness are blind people.

WINIFRED HOLT AND THE LIGHTHOUSE

Perry: During the time I was in New York, I became associated with the Lighthouse.

There was a movement started in New York to help the blind get employment. The idea was to build a shop and have the blind people work in the shop, same as we have in California. Here we have these shops run by the state. New York, for some reason or another, is very backward about those things, though she thinks she's way up.

You've read the name of the publisher of many books, Henry Holt and Company?

Baum: Oh yes.

Perry: Well, his daughter Winifred was a very prominent social figure in New York City and she became very enthusiastic about helping the blind adults. She heard of me in some way and she'd have me go down there and I'd sit and talk by the hour with her. The next day she'd ring again. It kept me away from my tutoring.

Baum: Did she want you to advise her?

Perry: Yes, she wanted me to talk about it. She wanted it, I think, for propaganda purposes also. I think she wanted to write up a lot of stuff and she

thought she could make a story out of it. I don't know. They started a broom shop for the blind and so forth.

So I at once said, "We ought to have an organization of these blind." That frightened her a little.

Baum: It did?

Perry: Finally she said all right. So I wrote up a constitution for them. We called a meeting and had a club formed. They called it...

Baum: Was that the New York Association for the Blind?

Perry: No, that was Miss Holt's organization. You mean the Lighthouse on 59th Street?

Baum: Yes.

Perry: Well, she was the founder of that and she was doing it then. They didn't have that building on 59th Street then. Of course, my association would be in connection with that. I think we called it the Blindmen's Self-Improvement Club. I had the "self" in it because I wanted the blind to do something themselves.

Baum: This was similar to the club you started here?

Perry: Yes. The word "self" made trouble. You see, Miss

Holt wanted to talk about what they were doing for the blind and not what the blind were doing for themselves. Socially, Miss Holt was high in society and she had the ear of endless wealthy people so she could do a lot and I was glad to encourage her. But of course, she couldn't see that "self" business at all.

At any rate, we formed the organization and she used to come to it. Eventually I told her I couldn't give the time any more. We had a big booming society of about 100 people. I've formed, I guess, dozens of organizations for the blind around in different places, but as soon as I left they usually died out. That society is still running now. They call themselves the Blindmen's Improvement Club. They took the "self" out after I left New York.

Baum: Did they accomplish much?

Perry: Well, not very much because they don't run it. You see, they are workers in that shop and the attitude of the agencies <u>for</u> the blind, not <u>of</u> the blind.. they intimidate the blind. The blind all have the feeling, and I guess there must be some foundation for it, that if they express ideas that don't happen to agree with the people in charge of the agency,

it will be to their great disadvantage. And it works that way. Of course in New York generally the agencies for helping the poor and so forth are very strongly entrenched and any poor fellow who has indulged in criticism will very soon wish he hadn't said anything. That is still true.

And Miss Holt took that same attitude and she wanted it to be a part of the association. She wanted to sort of dictate what they should do and what they shouldn't do and all the little programs were to be her programs, not theirs.

Baum: Do you think Winifred Holt really understood the problems of the blind?

Perry: Well, she thought she did.

No, she knew that the blind were in great need and she wanted to help them. Of course, like a great many people, she wanted to get a little glory. She would get the papers to write up things she had done. Expressions antagonistic to what she had said also got into the papers.

Baum: Made by blind people?

Perry: By blind people and friends of blind people who expressed the ideas of blind people. The editor of the Matilda Ziegler magazine wrote a long article

criticizing Miss Holt and it made quite a stir.

Baum: My goodness. Well, there wasn't any profit made on this shop, was there?

Perry: You mean for her?

Baum: Yes, or for anybody?

Perry: Well, they employed people. They had a manager and he was paid a salary. Of course, it was the beginning of an organization and naturally they didn't have a lot of money yet. These blind people were not making a living at all, but on the other hand, if they didn't do that they'd sit home, so some of them would go down and work, but they weren't real employees. They mixed up a good deal of chatter with their work.

Oh, I never questioned her motives myself. She would have liked to have done something for the blind and she had an idea she knew how to do it, which wasn't any too well founded, I guess. My own idea was that advanced education was the thing to help the blind. That's why I thought so much of a reader bill. The blind had schools to go to and when they got through with the school, they couldn't go to college and there they were lost.

However, the point was that she got me mingling in, helping her there and of course the blind people

got to coming to me. I wanted to get rid of that because I had to make a living myself. There was nothing in it except taking my time, and when I spent my time on them I wasn't making anything. So I tried to get out of it. But that's one thing about working for the blind--you start working for the blind and you can't get out of it. It keeps growing.

Baum: Do you mean you don't want to get out of it, really, after you've started?

Perry: Well, you don't want to, but if you did want to, you'd find it almost impossible. They keep coming and if you're really genuinely interested in helping them, and I guess we generally are, you spend your time on it when you should be thinking of yourself. Of course, if I'd been a millionaire or something of that kind it wouldn't have mattered, but I had to jump around pretty lively to keep myself alive.

Baum: I understand Carl Schurz was an advisor of Winifred Holt.

Perry: I don't know. He might have been. I didn't come in contact with him, or I've forgotten it. That was a long time ago, you know.

Baum: Mark Twain was in this New York Association for the Blind, too.

Perry: Well, yes. When they would try to have a meeting preparatory to collecting a lot of money, and in New York wealth is unlimited apparently, Miss Holt got up a meeting, spent several months advertising it. Of course, she was very, very prominent in society. They jumped at the opportunity of getting Mark Twain to come down and be one of the principal speakers at this big affair. I don't know that he ever took any great, particular interest in the blind. He made a delightful talk.

Baum: They got a lot of money at that meeting, didn't they?

Perry: Yes, they got a lot of money.

Baum: He didn't really work in the Association? He was just a big name.

Perry: Oh no, he was a big man brought in for his big name.

NEW YORK READER BILL FOR BLIND COLLEGE STUDENTS

Perry: Well, I kept thinking about a reader bill for the blind, so one day I said to myself, "I'm just going to write a bill and see if I can get somebody to introduce it in the legislature in Albany and see what happnes." It's funny, because I wrote the bill and then I didn't know where to find an assemblyman. It occurred to me then that the only place I could think of where they would probably know would be to go down to the saloon, so I went down and asked the saloonkeeper, "Who's your assemblyman around here?" He said, oh yes, he knew all about it and told me. If I had gone up to the University and asked any professor who the assemblyman was, he wouldn't have known.

I went and rang up the assemblyman. I told him my name and where I was andthat I had a bill I wanted to have introduced and would he have time for me to see him. He said, "Why yes, yes. I can come anytime. Do you want me to come up now?" I said, "No, I think I'll put it off. How about Sunday?" He said, "Yes."

So Sunday he walked in and I showed him the

bill and explained what it was. He said, "Why, it's fine. I think we can get that through." He introduced my bill in the Assembly.

Baum: Had you talked to any other blind people about this?

Perry: There, you mean?

Baum: Yes, in New York.

Perry: Not many. I had thought of it and I had plenty of opportunity to, but I knew that if I had advanced it, there would have been opposition and I thought I could get along better without saying anything about it at all. After all, the question was to get it through the legislature.

Baum: So you started this all alone.

Perry: Oh yes, entirely alone. I did make one move and I think I made a mistake, I went to the head of the...an organization of lawyers who give legal advice to the poor.

Baum: The Legal Aid Society?

Perry: Yes. I went to the head of the Legal Aid Society, after I got the bill introduced, and wanted him to write to the legislature or the governor. I gave him the number of the bill and so forth. He said, oh yes, he'd do it, and I guess he did. He said he did.

Later on I spoke to this same attorney that I'd asked to write to the governor and he said, "Well, I think, Dr. Perry, that I've done all that I think should...I think what you should do now is to see if you can't get an association interested in it."

Well, without his knowing what he was doing, he was telling me that Miss Holt had gotten in touch with him. That was after I had quit going down to her place. I knew right away that she would have opposed my idea of higher education. She would think that was a fancy because there'd be only one blindman in several thousand who could go to college. So I didn't say anything. I just acted dumb and went out. I don't think he could have done anything for me anyhow.

Everybody whom I spoke to about the bill said, "Why, it's unconstitutional. It's class legislation. Appropriating money for blind college students; why should they give it to blind people and not to other people?" Well, I was pretty sure that wasn't the case and I knew lots of lawyers. In fact, a lawyer and I sat together every day at dinner and

he said, "Oh, it's class legislation." Then the members of the legislature would write me that they thought it was unconstitutional, or they'd been told it was unconstitutional. It was very evident that I'd have to do something.

I had written to the Governor (Charles Evans Hughes) and asked if I could see him. That was before it had been introduced. So he very kindly told me that he'd be at a certain office at a certain date and would be glad to see me at a certain time. I went down that day and told him what I wanted. He was a very remarkable man. His mind went so fast that you couldn't keep up with it. He came back at me immediately, "Well, that sounds fine. Now, can you show me how in doing that, which would be a good thing for the blind, you're not opening up an opportunity for its wide extension over other classes. Here's a poor widow down the street here and she has to make a living for her children. She's got a boy and if he could go to college he'd be a better man and have greater opportunities. Why not give him some money? When they come forward with that plan, how can the legislature defend itself?"

Of course, that was the very thing I had been worrying about, but I didn't know the answer. But I saw that he practically gave me to understand that he'd be very glad to help me and thought it was a fine thing if I could get around that obstacle. So I thanked him and said, "Well, you'll have to give me a little time but I think I can do it."

I went down and bought a constitution of New York State and looked through it. Now, you know most all constitutions have, after they've put down what you can and cannot do, a section of exceptions and they say that notwithstanding anything stated elsewhere in this constitution, nothing in this constitution shall be interpreted to prevent this, that and the other thing. In all constitutions it is unlawful for the legislature to give money to any individual. They can pay you a salary for working for the state, but they can't present you with some money out of the state treasury.

I thought to myself, "I'll bet if I can find that section with the exceptions in it, we'll see if I won't find something." Well, I finally found the section and I think there were twenty-some-odd exceptions and way down, I remember it was number

eighteen, it said, "Nothing elsewhere stated in this constitution shall prevent the appropriation of state money for the education of the blind."

Well, I couldn't have asked for anything any better. Of course, the men who put that in there were undoubtedly thinking about the state school for the blind. They didn't say anything about adults or children, but I don't suppose the question of helping adult blind had ever been thought about. But that didn't make any difference. It did say for the education of the blind and my bill was for nothing else but the education of the blind. I quickly wrote to the Governor and told him just where to find it and quoted it and also to these legislators who had expressed their doubts as to its constitutionality.

Well, the assembly passed the bill in no time and got it into the senate. Finally, the head of the committee on appropriations, the financial committee, wrote me a letter and said they'd probably take up this bill on a certain day and he thought it might be a very good thing if I were present. So I had to leave and go up to Albany.

(0)

I was short of change. It was quite a joke how I got there. I'd have to run up to Albany and be there all day and maybe stay overnight. So I went down to the saloon on the corner again. There was a nice bunch of fellows who came there. Many of them were faculty members at Columbia. Almost like a club.

I sprang it on them. I told them what my situation was and that I wanted to go up there tomorrow morning and I wanted to know if they wanted to pass the hat around and see that I could get up there and get back. Well, there was silence all over. That kind of surprised me because I thought they'd be tickled to death. And then they came up with the question, "Well, I'd do it, sure, if it were going to help you. Will it be of any assistance to you in any way?" Well, I couldn't say "Yes." I didn't want to go to college. So I said, "No, it won't, not that I know of." They said, "Well, if you don't get anything out of it, what's the good of bothering about it?"

I gave them a talk about what it would accomplish, so they did pass the hat. I think they gave me

twelve or fifteen dollars.

Next morning I went down and got an early train and got to Albany. I went over to see my representative who had introduced my bill. He said he'd go up with me to the meeting of the committee that afternoon.

Baum: Do you remember what the name of this assemblyman was?

Perry: I think it was Brough. I remember asking him...he called himself "Bruff" and I said, "Where do you get your 'gh' in there?" He said, "Well, how do you spell 'rough'?"

I walked in to see the chairman of the senate committee and he said, "You go right up to our room. We're just adjourning our session and our committee will all be there in a few minutes." So I went in there and took a seat and they came in and held their meeting, one bill after another, one bill after another, didn't say a word about my bill. They kept on; the time got later, four o'clock, after four, after five. I thought, "Well, my heavens, they'll adjourn in a minute. I wonder if he's forgotten me." Then it occurred to me that he was doing that deliberately. He was waiting until they all wanted to adjourn and were all in a hurry and he would say

something about the bill and bingo, it would pass. I was taking a chance but I bet that was what he was doing.

Sure enough, at the very end he said, "Well, now we've got a little matter here." It was only for a small amount of money. $3,000 I was asking for. "I think we're all interestedin it and Dr. Perry is here. I'll ask him to speak on it. We want to get it out today if we can." He showed his hand right away to all of them that he wanted the bill out.

So I got up and told them what the plan was. There was only one man who I had thought would not fall for it. The chairman said, "Well, what's your decision, gentlemen? We'll have to adjourn." And they all voted and the thing went out unanimously.

Then, I was so tickled I went home and wrote a long letter to the Governor. The Governor in New York had thirty days to sign the bill and if he didn't sigh it, it was vetoed.

Baum: You said that you thought Winifred Holt would be against it.

Perry: Well, she was. She opposed it.

Baum: I was wondering if any other agencies opposed it.

You only think you thought something. I never did.

I was feeling a little sad that I got to examine some stolen.

Open mouth. It was very sad to see that.

[illegible] a real picture of [illegible]. [illegible]

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible]. [illegible]

It was [illegible] to speak of it. [illegible]

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible].

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible].

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible].

[illegible] [

Perry: They didn't know about it. I wanted to keep it as quiet as I could, because I'd rather concentrate on the people in the legislature. After the Governor had sighed it, they could make all the noise about it they wanted to. There was no pronounced opposition. Some people didn't care for it, but they didn't do anything about opposing it because they thought it wouldn't get anywhere anyhow, that it was a crazy idea.

The State of New York had two residential schools for the blind. Has still. The superintendent of one of them heard about the bill andhe wrote me a courteous, nice note urging that I withdraw the bill for the present so that they could all consider it and perhaps put it through next year. That simply meant that they didn't want anybody to take too much interest in what they were doing. They had a kind of isolated position in the schools; no one knows anything about them. They're not particularly anxious that people should take any interest in reforms or anything of that kind. I knew enough about blind schools to know that. So I wrote him a polite letter and said that I would consider what

he said. I phrased it in such a way that he would conclude that I wasn't going to go ahead with it. So he didn't bother me any more.

Time passed and I began to get worried. Two days before the expiration of the time for the Governor to sign, I rang Miss Holt up. I said, "My bill is in the Governor's hands; has been for some time; passed both houses unanimously; I want to have him sign it at least by tomorrow. If you wish to have your organization write to the Governor advocating it, that would be fine." She said, "Why didn't you tell me sooner?" I wasn't looking for an argument, so I let that go by. But when she realized that the thing was going to be a law, of course she wanted to be in on it. She said she would hold a committee meeting that night and endorse it and write a letter to the Governor. Apparently they did. Finally, the last day came. If he didn't sign it that day, it was gone. I said, "Well, I've done my best. I'll just sit down and take my medicine if I have to. I'll have to try next year again."

Around five o'clock the kids came out with their newspapers, yelling and shouting, and they were making an awful noise. "Governor signs reader bill for blind college students." I rushed out and got a newspaper. He had signed it the last day. That was in, I guess, August. The University started up shortly and eleven blind people entered college in New York.

I thought all the other states would just copy that. I was disappointed. They are doing so, but very slowly. Some did it after a year or so and some haven't done it yet. Then I came out to California in 1912, so I introduced it here right away. In fact, I introduced two forms of it and the Governor signed both of them. Now it's prevalent in pretty much all the states.

Of course, we've increasedthe amount from year to year. The last session the California legislature raised the amount...graduate students can spend $1200 reader money per year and undergraduates $1,000. The New York bill, when it started, was $300 a year. It's been a wonderful thing. Now, there is nothing to prevent a blind person, no matter what his situation is, if he's an orphan and lives in an almshouse; there is nothing to prevent his going to

college and getting his Ph.D. degree now in California, except his lack of brains and lack of ambition.

We now have in California in our different colleges over seventy blind people. The other states have some, but not so many.

Baum: It sounds as if the New York bill was a single-handed accomplishment by you. You did it all alone.

Perry: Well, I was afraid. If you started an argument about it with the public, you would find some opposition and I didn't see that you needed it. You had to present your case to the legislature; they're the ones who do the voting. You've got to get their consent. It looked very simple because the amount that I asked for was very small. My experience with legislatures--and I've been working with them all my life--is that that doesn't count as much as I thought it did. It's just as hard to get a bill appropriating $3,000 through the legislature as it is for $300,000. You have to do the same things and there's apt to be not very much enthusiasm because it looks like a trifling bill.

Baum: When you and Miss Holt disagreed on the reader's bill, did that damage your friendship?

Perry: Oh, it didn't do it much good. No...she was very, very friendly with me, but she was a woman who always wanted her way, very intolerantly, and I never had any discussion with her. But she did say, and talked around a good deal, about how unfair it was to have a reader bill, money for the few who were getting educated. She was going to put in a shop that was going to make a living for, I guess, all the blind in New York, she thought. Of course, it never does.

No, the people who know nothing about it at once think of a shop. Get the blind together, put them in, teach them to do one thing and they'll all make a good living and be happy the rest of their lives. But in the first place, the blind people wouldn't want to do it. They vary in their tastes like anybody else. They would dislike the job.

Of course, what you can't get people to understand is why to educate the blind is so expensive. You spend so much money on one person instead of taking the same money and helping a whole lot of people. That's their argument. The fact is, that if you'll educate a few blind people,

it brings about a great change. The great interest in the blind now is due to the fact that a few blind people have had an education.

I helped a boy, Ernest Crowley, get into the legislature in Sacramento, and he became possibly the most popular man in the legislature. He was a lawyer. Everybody in the state knew him or knew of him, practically, and knew that he was totally blind. It stopped all the talk about how helpless the blind were, that there was nothing they could do. He could get bills through the legislature when no one else could...He died a few years ago, and it seemed as if the whole county was at his funeral. It has done away with most of that talk about how you can pity the blind but you mustn't expect anything of them.

Baum: Apparently Governor Hughes was able to see your point of view rather than Miss Holt's view.

Perry: Well, fundamentally my point was very simple. If you educate a man, you increase his opportunities of doing things. I think Hughes saw at once that it was a more serious problem for the blind than for the others and that an education would reduce his

difficulties. He saw that in the time you could snap your finger.

Baum: It sounds as if you thought he was a very bright man.

Perry: Hughes? Oh he was, a very brilliant man.

Baum: Did you vote for him for governor?

Perry: Yes, I did.

Baum: You thought he was a good governor?

Perry: He was a remarkably good governor. Of course, he was a very, very upright man, very brilliant.

CHARLES CAMPBELL

Baum: Did you come into contact with Charles Campbell? I think he's the fellow who founded Outlook for the Blind.

Perry: Campbell? Oh, I know who you mean. Yes, I knew Charles Campbell very well. He was the son of a blind man. His father was an American and became quite a prominent musician and he went on tours through England, where he would give musical performances. England wanted to do something to improve the lot of their blind and they decided to build an institution, a school, so they asked him to take charge of it. (Francis Campbell, Sir Francis. His wife was Lady Campbell.) He was a very competent man. His blind pupils were noticeably successful. He was quite a hand at propagandizing. He told wonderful stories about his students. A great many people criticized him as being an exaggerator--he undoubtedly was very intensely interested in helping the blind, and collecting money in England was a little slow, but he did build up an institution there that was very much respected.

His son, Charles, grew up with an interest in the same thing and he became a propagandist and traveled around the country here lecturing. He married a very lovely woman. She was in California when I first knew her.

I was in New York when they were booming the idea of having these shops for the blind. Charles was engaged in that sort of work in Boston, but he came to New York to lecture. Charles Campbell was a very efficient man too. He was enthusiastic, a good talker, and he was very optimistic about it.

Many of the people who were connected with the blind were not optimistic. That was the one trouble with the schools that we had. The superintendents were selected, evidently, in a very careless way and none of them were particularly men of ability and some of them didn't have much of an education. Those men rather belittled Charles Campbell. They said he was just a hot-air artist making a big noise and that a great deal of what he said was not reliable. That's because they couldn't believe it.

You see, our schools for the blind were filled with people who didn't understand the blind and didn't believe in their capabilities at all. At

that time the feeling generally was that the blind couldn't do anything anyhow, but it was very wonderfully nice of certain people to come and help the blind. The teachers of the blind were looked upon as sort of saints and missionaries and they were quite willing to accept that admiration. But they were not progressive nor imaginative. I don't know that they are yet.

Baum: Well, you must not have agreed with Charles Campbell on the shop idea.

Perry: Oh, I didn't bother much about it. I wasn't working for it in any way. I was friendly to him. I didn't mind their building shops for the blind if they wanted to, but I had the feeling that fifty years from then the people would not have acquired independence through self-support. And I don't think they have. These shops don't develop men of ability; they don't try to. They are frequently run by men who don't know anything about it.

Then the blind themselves did nothing, said nothing, were not articulate--they were afraid to talk. As a result very little was accomplished. That is what we, in the past few years, have done.

We deliberately, and with forethought, planned to make the blind assume the responsibility of bettering the condition of the blind.

Baum: Did you know Charles Campbell and his wife as personal friends or did they ask you for advice?

Perry: Yes. Well, they did sometimes. No, I think they were possibly inclined to give me advice.

Baum: You liked them?

Perry: Yes, I thought they were very nice people. Of course, they were not interested in the subject I was interested in. You see, you can't do everything. You can't start a group of people who will devote their time to entertaining and trying to supply the blind with some amusement, take them out riding...I don't want to belittle that, that's all right, but five hundred years from now they'd be doing the same thing. Those blind people that they attend are not independent and never will be. And don't particularly want to be.

Baum: Well, Campbell didn't do that, did he?

Perry: No, no. Campbell was interested in helping the blind, but it was largely teaching them trades. The idea of a blind man getting an education and becoming a doctor or lawyer or something like that, that was

something like a Cinderella story. He didn't take it seriously, and no one else did.

When I came to New York I could find only one blind man who had ever gone to college.

Baum: Is that right? No wonder it wounded like a fairy story.

Perry: New York is just packed full of colleges so I thought when I came that there must be quite a number of blind college graduates. I couldn't find any. I'd ask about them and no one had ever heard of one. But there was one man who had gone to college. He was a classmate of the man who was president of Columbia at that time. He tells the story that at the graduation from college this blind boy and this future president of Columbia were the two contestants for being the most outstanding student of the class and the president got it. This blind man went into mathematics, gave lectures at Columbia University.

Baum: What was his name?

Perry: I can't think of it.

ROBERT IRWIN

Baum: Did you know Robert Irwin then? He went to college, didn't he?

Perry: Yes, Robert was from the state of Washington, went to the school for the blind there and later went through the university. Then he moved to New York and started the plan of sending blind children, not to residential school, but to the public schools. He then went to Ohio and he'd get classes started in the public schools for the blind. He did that in two or three of the cities there. Then he came to New York City and got interested in starting the American Foundation for the Blind.

He was quite an able man and made a real success out of the creation of this foundation. It's done a great deal for the blind, I think. Of course, they don't run shops. They try to help all the activities for the blind throughout the country. They've now gotten fairly well established. I expect their yearly expenditures run up close to a million dollars.

Baum: Did Robert Irwin favor college education for blind people?

Perry: Oh, I think so. I don't think he was as enthusiastic as I was.

Many of the things that I had to work for, which were new and people couldn't understand it, nowadays they just take it as a matter of course. A blind boy in former days couldn't go to college, didn't have the money and didn't think he could work his way through college. They could, I guess. I earned most of my way through college. So did Robert Irwin. He had to go around and peddle things from house to house. He had great difficulties going to college. They had no reader bill. He had to try to get people who were willing to help him a little bit to read to him.

Baum: I heard somewhere that you and Robert Irwin worked together to defeat a movement for a national college for the blind.

Perry: I don't know as we did very much about it. I guess we both would oppose it.

Baum: Did you do any work together on it?

Perry: Well, we talked about it and evidently thought about the same thing and probably expressed ourselves. I know, I wrote to some of the different

Jerry: Oh, I think so. I don't think he was at
embarrassed by it yet.

Mary: One of the things that I had to worry about,
were they all going to be couples. Didn't have
the money so they couldn't go to college. I don't have
that problem so I don't think he could ever be in our
economic position. That could. I guess. I guess
being only two record college. We couldn't
afford. So you'll go ahead and get married
[illegible] to do.
[illegible] to do [illegible]. So you'll
get married [illegible] to work for a little
bit more [illegible] to [illegible]
[illegible].

Jerry: I guess [illegible] with the Peace Corps working
together for [illegible] two [illegible] college
for the [illegible].

Mary: I don't know how did you [illegible]. I guess
we [illegible].

Jerry: Did you [illegible]?

Mary: Well, it [illegible] it was really [illegible]
about two [illegible] possibility [illegible]
ourselves. [illegible], I guess [illegible] of the different

people about it. The contention to have it was not very strongly pushed. It's an absurd idea.

Baum: It's an idea that has come up again and again, hasn't it?

Perry: Oh, I don't think it will come up any more, not seriously, anyhow. What would a college for the blind be? They they get in college, and with their reader funds, they're just like anybody else. They are at no disadvantage. They can go to Columbia or the University of California. They can have the best of teachers.

Now, if the federal government started a college for the blind, they wouldn't have men like Einstein teaching in it. It would be a mediocre, insignificant thing where they would give out degrees because they were blind people, I expect. No, I think after a blind person reaches the eleventh or twelfth grade, it's better for him to work with sighted people. He's got to live with them. He's not going to make any money off of blind people. If he's going to get ahead in the world, he wants to have the ability to approach sighted people.

Baum: I wondered what you thought of Robert Irwin.

Perry: I think he did good work. He built up the American Foundation for the Blind quite well.

Baum: Was he ever a member of the National Federation?

Perry: Oh no.

Baum: He didn't approve of that?

Perry: Well, it worried him a little. He would come to the meetings, but usually just to see me.

Baum: You were friends?

Perry: Yes. But he was afraid that the Federation was going to hurt the Foundation. I don't know why it should; but they both feel that way.

Baum: Both?

Perry: Both the Foundation and the Federation. The Foundation is trying to antagonize and oppose the Federation. And the Federation criticizes the Foundation a lot.

Baum: Do you think it's a valid criticism? Of the Foundation?

Perry: I never heard any systematic criticism. Just that they don't like them. I don't know why. I don't see any occasion for them to criticize one another adversely at all.

Baum: You think the Foundation does good work for the blind?

Perry: It doesn't do the work that the Federation is doing. But it doesn't try to. Different kind of work; their policies are different. The Foundation likes to play with the agencies. It isn't built on the principle of the National Federation. The Federation says to the blind, "If you want something, it's up to you to go and get it. You've got to quit depending on someone else; you've got to organize yourselves and go get it." And I believe that. I think that's right. The Foundation is interested in psychology of the blind, or something of that kind.

Personally, Irwin was self-centered and a selfish individual. I don't know that many people aren't. He was very much interested in himself and was quite an efficient man, and from his point of view, very successful. He died a rich man. Started out as a boy with nothing. Intensely interested in his own welfare, which is all right, I guess.

WALTER HOLMES

Baum: Did you know Walter Holmes while you were in New York?

Perry: Walter Holmes? Very well. He wanted to start a Braille magazine. He was not blind, but he was very much interested in the blind. Wonderful fellow. We met in a library and became great friends. He got Mrs. Matilda Ziegler, a widow whose husband had been a very wealthy explorer to the North Pole, to put up the money for the magazine. Of course, now there are a great many magazines for blind people.

Baum: Is that called the Matilda Ziegler Magazine?

Perry: Yes. (Shows Braille magazines).

Baum: Did you think this Matilda Ziegler Magazine was a good one?

Perry: It's better now than it was. It was very popular; they must have had ten or fifteen thousand readers. Holmes had been a newspaper man. He had a blind half-brother in whom he took a great deal of interest. The blind boy wasn't particularly bright or talented or trained for anything, and it used to worry Holmes. The father said, "Don't bother him; just be kind to him and let it go at that."

Holmes took out a lot of insurance on himself with the blind boy as beneficiary, but the blind boy died first, and Holmes lived to be quite old.

Wonderful man. He somehow understood the blind thoroughly. While most sighted people want to be kind to blind people, they don't understand them. Holmes was a bachelor; he devoted all his life, morning, noon and night, to helping blind people.

This Ziegler magazine was the first Braille magazine in this country. Holmes thought it was quite important that blind people have a magazine because they can't pick up as much through experience as other people. Holmes was not interested in making a profit; he just wanted to help the blind. A man once wanted him to leave the magazine for the blind and come in with him on another business. Holmes said, "I'm not interested in making money." The other man said, "I am; I've made a whole lot of money, and I don't know what else to do but keep on making money." Holmes turned him down. So the fellow went on with his plan and made two million dollars in the next year and a half. Then he asked Walter Holmes if he were sorry he hadn't gone in

with him. Holmes said no, he wouldn't know what to do with a million and a half if he had it.

Baum: Did he favor your reader's bill?

Perry: Yes.

Baum: Did he give you any publicity in his magazine?

Perry: He would have, but I told him I didn't want any.

I had gone before to the Outlook--that magazine has been discontinued--I don't mean Outlook for the Blind, but The Outlook, a weekly magazine. Theodore Roosevelt was the editor on The Outlook for a while. The real editor, who wrote editorials in The Outlook, was a very famous editor, Lyman Abbott. So I gave him a summary on what the reader bill was, and he wrote an editorial on it. Quite a lengthy one. I gave him a copy of my letter to the governor, and he referred to that a good deal in the editorial. (Outlook, Vol. 86, p. 938, August 31, 1907.) It was an extremely popular magazine all over the country....After the bill was signed, he wrote an article about it. He was a very brilliant man.

MAJOR MIGEL

Baum: Was Major Migel working for the blind at the time you were in New York? Migel of the American Foundation for the Blind?

Perry: When I first got up that club I organized for blind people--Miss Holt's blind people--she came to the meeting (she would always bring some guests with her, society people) one time and brought Migel. Migel got very much excited. He was very much taken with me; we were great friends, for the moment, anyhow.

He wanted me to come down to his office. He turned out to be a very wealthy man, a silk merchant. So he said, "If you would be interested in this--I've got to go to Europe for a couple of months--but if you would hunt out these blind people that you think are desirable for us to do something for them, educationally or otherwise, get familiar with their names, so that when I come back, we'll go over it and see what we can do." Well, that was really a wonderful proposition, because he was a man who was intensely interested in the blind, and he had the

money and the desire to help. So I said that I would try to, but of course, I was tutoring and had limited time. But he insisted.

Miss Holt heard about this. Of course she was up in arms. In the first place, she had introduced me to Migel. But when Migel was thinking of doing something that wasn't in her line, she was worried. She was very fond of newspaper publicity and loved to read about what she had done, while Migel would just as soon his name never occurred in the paper. That wouldn't interest him at all. She was so antagonistic to him in talking to me that I could see that if I went on with what Migel wanted, that I'd have to stop doing things that I had been doing for her.

That would be a very undesirable thing, so I decided to tell Migel that I was giving all my time to Miss Holt. So I rang up one of his lieutenants and told him that I would have to postpone any work or let it go. The man said, "Of course, I have no authority in this matter, but I do know that Mr. Migel would be very disappointed if you didn't work for him."

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Of course Migel didn't understand and wouldn't understand my relationship with Miss Holt, particularly, so I told the man that it would be impossible for me to do it until Migel got back. When he got back and was told by his informants that I had withdrawn from that work, I suppose he just thought that was the end of it. I didn't keep up my acquaintance with him any more. Robert Irwin came along then and got in touch with Migel, and Migel did a great deal helping him start that American Foundation. Still does.

CONFLICT WITHIN THE SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF AND BLIND, 1912

Baum: After your stay in New York you came back to the School for the Blind in Berkeley. I believe about the first thing you did was to get married.

Perry: Yes, I think April 19, 1912.

Baum: How was the school in 1912? Was it improved from the time you left?

Perry: Some of the old teachers were gone, and they had new ones. Nobody seemed to be doing much work. There was less zeal in the school. The School for the Deaf and Blind had been disorganized by a political interference. Dr. Wilkinson resigned a couple of years before. He had been principal for about forty some-odd years.

Baum: Why did he resign? Old age?

Perry: Yes.

Baum: Wasn't any political trouble, though.

Perry: Not that. Two or three of the different employees wanted to succeed Dr. Wilkinson. They had some students, too, who made trouble.

There was Miss Mary White Eastman, a blind graduate of the School, who was a teacher of the blind children, little children, in what they

called an "opportunity group" for retarded children. She was a woman who had never had any experience or training except that she was naturally a very good teacher. She was very ambitious and wanted to be made the head of the blind department. Then there was Mr. Douglas Keith, an Englishman, who had been the secretary to the principal for many years; and a teacher of the deaf, Francis E. H. O'Donnell, a Scotsman, who wanted to be appointed.

The school was run by a board of five members who were prominent people and they served without compensation. They were the people who would select the principal. So they appointed Mr. Keith.

Baum: Had Keith done any teaching?

Perry: He had done teaching before he came there.

A good many of the teachers got playing around among the politicians complaining about the school, that it wasn't being run properly, and so forth. Some of them got the children excited. The place was terribly demoralized.

Baum: This was after Mr. Keith had been appointed?

Perry: Yes. The people that had been disappointed were complaining. Finally the appeal was made to the Governor, Hiram Johnson, and so he ordered an

investigation. I suppose it lasted for a month or two. I wasn't here then. There were also a great many complaints about Mr. Wilkinson, though he had left. The investigators came down every day and had a hearing and everybody was called in to talk, tell his story, the older boys and some of the alumni. Some of the alumni wanted jobs up there and they didn't get them; I guess they should not have had them. They began to feel their oats.

Well, it was made very hard for Mr. Keith. He decided to resign. He sent me a telegram to come out and take the position as head of the blind department. He was going to leave on a certain day, but he stayed until he got my reply that I would come. So I simply took the train and came out.

Baum: Had you been corresponding with the school while you were in New York?

Perry: Not much. Once in a while. Mr. Keith and I had been very close friends while I was here. He was a fine man, but he got into the wrong mess. There was so much jealousy and hard feeling that it looked as if it would be a hard thing to handle. So the Governor's recommendation was that Mr. Keith should be removed and that the board should get a

new man. Things got hotter, with everybody trying to get the Governor to get him in. The board was in favor of Mr. Keith. It didn't want to get rid of him, but the Governor insisted.

When I came out, they had a teacher of the deaf as acting principal, not one who had been a troublemaker at all, but one of the head men, William Andrew Caldwell. He had been there for many years and was practically the head of the deaf department. He was a great friend of Mr. Wilkinson's too.

The board complained to the Governor that they didn't know any good man to get. The Governor said that he had received word from several men in the East that wanted the job and he thought some of them were very good.

There was a man who had been in the Colorado State School for the Deaf and Blind. L. E. Milligan was his name. He came out and took the job. He had a good deal of trouble, too, to start with because everybody was wanting a higher position. He was very tactful in many ways. He, of course, got into this political mess that was going around, and there was a good deal of ill feeling.

Baum: Did the two teachers stay on--Miss Eastman and--

Perry: Yes, Miss Eastman stayed. And O'Donnell. That was a mess. Mr. Caldwell kept his position as head of the deaf department. He tried not to make much trouble. They were all very embarrassed because of the politicians.

Baum: Who do you mean, politicians?

Perry: Real politicians, members of the legislature, people who were friends of the Governor.

Baum: You mean this group that had been investigating?

Perry: Yes. But Milligan kept them pretty quiet.

Baum: Was Mr. Keith still working at the school?

Perry: No, he left. When I got here,he was a man without a job.

The row had spread to the Oakland Home for Adult Blind, and they investigated down there for a year or so too. The Home was run by a very capable blind man, Mr. Joseph Sanders, who became ill and died about that time. The Home was directed by a board. They came to see me to find out whom I would suggest as the new director. I recommended Mr. Keith and pointed out that he was a very capable man and that he had lost his job rather unfairly because of a political upset and

and no fault of his own. They offered me the job instead, but I turned them down; there was nothing educational about it. So they appointed Mr. Keith and he did a good job down there.

When they were having their investigation, the alumni split. A few were in with the politicians, but the alumni that I had organized before I left in '98 upheld Mr. Keith. So when Milligan came, of course, he had to make up his mind whether he was going to be a friend of these alumni or of the ones that had been making the trouble. He didn't want to be an opponent of the Governor, for if it hadn't been for the Governor, he wouldn't have gotten his job, so he joined the wrong party, the Governor's party. But all the progressive blind, whom I had organized before, were friends of Keith, and instead of the trouble dying out, it got worse and worse.

When I got here, I tried to bring the two groups together, but I couldn't get anywhere. The other group were people with no education and no ability of any kind; they were nobodies. They had no ideas on how to improve the situation and I guess didn't particularly care. One of them, the leader,

Mr. Don Darrow, wanted a job at the school. He was a man of no education beyond graduating from the school. No college. He was not esteemed by anybody. I guess Mr. Milligan would have been very glad to give him the job, but he was afraid because it would start the other blind people, my group, up in arms. The feeling between them was very intense.

We got up a club and had both groups meeting together until Darrow's group made it impossible, and so we just gave up the attempt. We were trying to help the alumni get jobs and get started in business. I remember that once the alumni wanted to have some money to do something with, so I gave them a donation, I think $100. Then when we found the two groups of alumni couldn't get along, we dropped out and didn't do anything further with Darrow's group. Next thing I heard, they had taken the $100 that was to be spent on trying to help some of the fellows get started in business and used it to give themselves a picnic and ride around San Francisco Bay.

Baum: That group didn't have any ambition for improvement!

Perry: Oh no, they didn't have any ideas. The school had run down very much. The boys grew up and were rather rough and rude and had evidently not studied anything; they had very few textbooks.

Baum: Was Mr. Milligan able to improve things?

Perry: Well, he tried to, but he...you see, the children that had been there had been under the influence of the people who had been making the trouble. They still tried to associate with the children. That caused trouble. They were in opposition to anything that I wanted to do.

Baum: Did Mr. Milligan stay on as principal?

Perry: Yes, he stayed until he died, which was quite a while later.

Baum: What did he think of your organization of alumni?

Perry: I think he thought it was a very fine thing, but that the organization did not support him very strongly. I believe a lot of them thought he wasn't overly fond of me. I don't think he had any feeling against me. He simply was a little afraid to be over-friendly because he was afraid of this other mob. Since the Governor had removed Mr. Keith, it looked as if Darrow's crowd was the right crowd, so I can understand how he would think that he had to line

up with that bunch of people. He made a mistake because all the progressive blind were on the other side.

Baum: Was he progressive in his ideas?

Perry: Well. (hesitates). He was no great champion of anything. He was just a man who wanted to run the school and get his salary. I never heard of his springing any new ideas on anybody.

Baum: Was he aware of the problem of making a living that his students would have when they graduated?

Perry: No, I don't think so. I don't think he ever thought about it.

SEPARATION OF SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND AND SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

Baum: How did the separation of the School for the Deaf and the School for the Blind come about?

Perry: My old organization, which still exists, got up a plan to see if it could do something to separate the Blind School from the Deaf School. So we started propagandizing for it. Also, there was a movement to have the school taken away from the board that governed it and have it become a part of the public school organization, be under the Superintendent of Education.

Baum: Did you favor that?

Perry: Yes. We all did. And propagandized for it. And eventually got it through.

Baum: How did you propagandize for it?

Perry: We wrote articles in the newspapers advocating it and eventually we had a plan to be put on the ballot if we could get enough signatures, and have it enacted.

Baum: When did you start all this?

Perry: 1912. The movement to do away with the board--that was passed by the legislature, so the old board withdrew. That didn't happen for two or three years.

Then we worked on a plan to separate the two schools. The idea was to have the school up here where we have both of them now, and build a new school for the deaf. The deaf are much more numerous than the blind. We wanted the blind to stay here. We advocated getting a big piece of land for the deaf where they could learn, in addition to academic subjects, trades and farming. It always struck me that farming was a thing that the deaf could do as well as anybody. There was nothing for them here that they couldn't get out in the country just as well. They used moving pictures; they could use them up in the country just as well. I wanted the blind to be near, where they could go to musical concerts and go to college. I thought Berkeley was an ideal place. I wanted the Deaf School to move to the country.

Baum: You weren't able to accomplish that, were you?

Perry: I got the act written and then we had to get signatures. We had no money or any great number of people that agreed with us. Teachers at the school didn't want anything of that kind. They wanted things left alone. None of them understood what it meant, anyhow.

A few young alumni, maybe eight, went out and tried to get signatures. Ernest Leslie and Leslie Schlingheyde were among them. I'd take them down to the crowded Tenth Street Produce Market in Oakland. Then I'd address the crowd and they would be there with the petitions to be signed. On one Saturday we got more than 11,000 signatures. We did very well, but we had no statewide team and no money. We had to hire someone to look up every signature and find out what precinct the voter came from. I used up all my war stamp savings for that purpose and it took me two years of monthly payments to pay off the printer's bill on our advertising.

We didn't get enough signatures. We were 10,000 short of what we needed, but that was a very good showing. There was so much propagandizing along with it that a great many people had joined our idea. So I really was going to run it again, the year following, but I didn't have the time. I thought I'd let it go for a while.

The legislature was finally convinced that they should be separated somewhat. Instead of following what we suggested they kept the two schools here,

but separated them administratively. They are separate but on the same ground, which I don't think is really good for the deaf and I don't believe there's enough ground allotted to the blind. But they were separated and have separate principals.

Baum: I have a note that the separation was in 1921.

Perry: Yes.

Baum: Think that was largely due to the propagandizing of the Alumni Association?

Perry: Yes.

Baum: It sounds as if your alumni group was quite active.

Perry: It became very active.

Baum: Had they been active while you were in New York and Europe?

Perry: No, they had gone to sleep. But when they understood that Keith wanted me to come, they got very active. They went to the board then and insisted that it take Mr. Keith's recommendation and have me come.

Baum: But ordinarily they didn't do anything unless you were right there keeping them moving?

Perry: Well, not very much. You had to have someone around to drive them. Of course, now things are somewhat different. Some of those boys have gone to college

and have training, they have jobs, they're lawyers. Now we have lots of blind people who are holding good positions and they are all interested in the progress of the blind. And now it's been made a national movement instead of a local one.

Baum: Now you have lots of leadership material.

Perry: Yes. Now we have clubs for the blind. My Alumni Association for the Blind was the only club that existed for a long time. Then we formed the Council for the Blindin 1934 and we encouraged the creation of local clubs of the blind, to be run by the blind entirely. That was a new idea. No one had ever thought of the blind running a campaign for themselves; they always waited for someone to direct them.

Baum: Then you sort of trained the leadership that is available now?

Perry: Oh yes, they're all my boys. Dr. ten Broek, Robert Campbell, George Fogarty, Ernest Crowley, Ernest Leslie, Leslie Schlingheyde were my boys.

Baum: Is this mainly in California?

Perry: I did a good deal of that sort of thing in New York when I was there too. That's what my reader bill was supposed to do.

PERRY'S DUTIES AT THE SCHOOL

Baum: What were your duties at the School in 1912?

Perry: I was the head teacher of the blind. It was pretty difficult for a while.

Baum: Were you an actual teacher or an administrator?

Perry: Both.

Baum: Were you head teacher for the blind at the School all this time?

Perry: I was the head teacher for the blind until I became very interested in advanced studies. From then on I mainly taught college preparatory classes. Mr. Chapman took over the administrative duties of the head teacher for the blind.

Baum: When did you become Director of Advanced Studies?

Perry: Well, I guess I was formally appointed Director of Advanced Studies in about 1921 or 1922--Dr. French was Superintendent then--but I was practically that already. I helped the boys to get through the high schools. We had to get money some way to help them get readers.

Baum: When they were in the high school?

Perry: Yes. When I first came there I had a class of eight boys and they struck me as bright boys, but none of

them had the slightest thought of going to college. One day I asked them what they had been thinking about how they would make a living when they got out of school. They didn't have the slightest idea. They didn't believe they'd ever be able to make a living.

Baum: It was just as bad as in the days when you were a student.

Perry: It was a little worse. After I had been there a little while, I said to one of the teachers, "I've got eight boys in there and every one of those boys should go to college." She waited awhile and then she said, "But Doctor, they're blind boys."

Baum: She must have known you'd gone to college.

Perry: I don't know how she figured that. But every one of those boys went to college. Three of those boys became attorneys and have done very well. They all became successful men.

Baum: A big part of your job was guiding boys through the nigh school.

Perry: Yes, and through college too.

Baum: You had a reader bill in California by then. That was passed in 1913.

Perry: ~~When I first started sending students to college here, the boys who had been up here at the School~~

Perry: When I first started sending students to college here, the boys who had been up here at the School said, "That would be fine. Get me a place to live. I'd like to live in the same house with so-and-so," --another blind fellow. I'd always write back and say, "No, I don't want you to live in the same house with another blind boy. I want you to go out with the sighted people." It was quite a task to get them over that. It brings you back to the fact that sensitiveness is the greatest obstacle in the way of the blind.

Some blind people are not sensitive at all about their blindness. They forget all about it; they don't talk about it much. I don't think I ever think about my blindness. But sighted people think blind people think about their blindness all the time. You see, the sighted man looks upon blindness with the thought, "How would I be if I went blind in the next two minutes?" There's nothing he can do for himself. It is that view that makes them so desperate.

One day I was talking to the legislature about a bill for the blind and they were rather unwilling to see the need of something I was trying to put over.

I said, "Why, you fellows don't seem to understand. These people that go blind, they are really in a terrible state. If you want to know what he's thinking about, he's probably thinking about committing suicide." Well, they were going to give me the ha-ha.

I said to them, "Within a distance of less than a hundred miles from where you gentlemen are sitting now, the man who held perhaps the highest educational position in California just committed suicide two days ago. He was told he was going blind." He was President of the University of California. I didn't mention that, but they ought to have known who I meant. President Campbell, who was the head of the Lick Observatory for many years, a very distinguished astronomer, jumped out of the top floor thinking to kill himself and he lived a few days after that. He said at the time, why the thought of his wife waiting on him. He couldn't do anything. Why bother other people; he'd be a nuisance to others, so the only fair thing would be to get out. If he'd known some other blind people at the time, he might not have felt that way, but he didn't.

Perry: But most blind people are sensitive about their blindness. I had one boy, a Phi Beta Kappa here at college, a brilliant man. He studied law, started practicing with $1,000 worth of promissory notes to people who wanted to help him out. He now owns six buildings in Modesto, a lot of land that is being developed. A few days ago I said, "How much would it take for me to buy you out of everything you've got?" He said, "Oh, it would be between $50,000 and $60,000." He's very highly respected by all the attorneys in Modesto.

Baum: What was the name of that attorney in Modesto?

Perry: Leslie Schlingheyde. (Leslie Schlingheyde passed away March, 1956.)

This boy had this sensitive feeling. He was going to the Berkeley High School. I said to him, "When the school is over in the afternoon, what do you do?" He said, "I go home." I said, "Well, the other boys all go down there to the track where they race. Why don't you go down there with them?" "No, no. What would they say?" I said, "I don't know. They'd talk to you like they talk to the other people."

He would finally say that he'd try it once. In about two or three weeks he'd come down again and

I'd ask him, "Well, have you gone down to the track?" No, he hadn't. And we'd have the argument again. That went on for months. He would promise to do it, he intended to do it, but he was afraid.

Finally he came up one day and said, "Do you know what I did? I went down to the track." I said, "Did you have an embarrassing situation?" He said, "No, everybody came up and said, 'Hello, Schling,'" and they'd joke with him. He had a wonderful time. But he thought it would be very different.

That sensitiveness makes blind people timid and they don't want to go to a dance for fear they might do something wrong. It's too bad. If we could find some way of breaking the young blind of their sensitiveness, it would be a great boon and help them greatly. I don't know how to do it, except to go and take them with you, force it on them.

Baum: Were most of your students at the School boys?

Perry: There were more boys than girls. No, we had a good many girls who went to college and we do still. The girls have positions. They become stenographers... we've got to keep opening up opportunities for the blind to get positions. If you don't you simply rob them of life.

Baum: Do you think the blind girls have as good an opportunity to get a job as the blind boys have?

Perry: Well...I think so. A girl could become a lawyer, I guess, become a writer, a typist. We have girls who are typists, wonderful typists.

Baum: Did you have as many girls make a success as your boys? Some of your boys were pretty outstanding.

Perry: Yes, I've done a better job with the boys than I have with the girls, in the long run. Girls, I don't think, have as many opportunities, but they are getting them now. We have girls employed as typists, working in X-ray darkrooms; we have a good many girls doing that.

The great difficulty is that the blind need someone to get them a job. We have no one who does that. We have a State Bureau of Rehabilitation. They don't like to do placement work. The law calls for it, but they don't like it. It's hard work. It's much easier to sit around in the office and write notes and copy something off, go through the motions of doing something and get a good salary for it. Of course, a placement officer could get jobs for a hundred sighted people with no more effort than he would expend getting a job for one blind

person. Now it's getting a little easier getting a job for a blind person because we're getting the public somewhat educated to the idea.

We need someone who is told by the Bureau of Rehabilitation that he is employed as a placement worker and instructed to confine himself to working for the placement of blind people in jobs. He can't do that by sitting in his office. He's got to go out and wear out his shoe leather going from one businessman to the next and keep it up. In a little while he'd get to know all these businessmen and he could easily approach them. It would be slow and hard, but it would get easier and easier as time goes by. He would get to know all the employers and not have to wait to get in and see the boss. He walks in, calls him by his first name. If a man spent six hours a day walking around, his first three months he might only land one job, but inside of a year he'd very easily get jobs. In fact, the employers would ring him up and say, "Have you got a blind man to do so and so? Send him around and I'll give him a job." That's not how it starts, but it gets that way. That is the only solution.

AID TO NEEDY BLIND BILL, 1928

Baum: I understand you were instrumental in getting the Aid to Needy Blind bill?

Perry: Yes, I wrote the bill to get pensions for the blind. It had to be voted on by the people because the legislature could not give money to an individual without a constitutional amendment.

We got a senator to introduce the amendment I wrote giving the legislature the power to give financial aid to the blind. A lady assemblywoman from Berkeley did the same thing for the aged, put in a bill for the aged to have a pension, so we had two bills on the ballot, both amending the same section in the Constitution.

Baum: One was for the blind and one was for the aged. What about the deaf?

Perry: No, the deaf never had a bill. Mrs. Anna L. Saylor, the assemblywoman from Berkeley, wasn't particularly in favor of the act for the blind because I think she thought the public wasn't. She assumed we had a very small organization and took it as a joke. But she worked for the aged and the aged worked very hard too.

Of course, I only had a few blind boys to help me advertise, a few in college and one in the high

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school. And I didn't have the time because I was teaching at the School all the time, but we did it. To the surprise of everybody, our measure passed way ahead of any measure ever proposed, so the joke was sort of on the other people. The bill for the aged passed too.

That only gave the legislature the authority to grant us a pension. That was passed by the voters in November, 1928. When the legislature met in January, 1929, Mr. Crowley, who was one of my blind boys, an attorney, introduced the first bill for the pension for the blind.

Baum: He was in the legislature by then?

Perry: I think he was in the legislature a little before that. He was in the legislature for twenty-six years, until he died several years ago.

We got the bill through without any trouble. The governor a few days after the election said, "Well, we certainly have to do something for the blind." He meant we had gotten such a deep vote that it was a mandate. Governor Young signed it without any trouble.

Mrs. Saylor had been in the Assembly. She and the Governor were very good political friends and he appointed her the head of the Department of Social Welfare. It was a political office then. She was a very popular lady, very much respected by everybody. She wanted her department to have all the power over the pensions. She was a little humiliated because here we blind people had put the pension for the blind over. She hadn't put in any bill for a pension for the blind. When we walked off with the big vote it embarrassed her.

We also had a blind boy, Ernest Leslie, run for the legislature against Mrs. Saylor, and he made a wonderful showing. She just got in by the skin of her teeth, and for a woman who had been so popular politically as she had, it was an awful blow. She only got 800 votes more than Leslie. It hurt her political prestige. Ernest Leslie had just gotten through college. While he was defeated, it was a great victory because he almost defeated the most popular member of the legislature.

CALIFORNIA COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND

Baum: I want to ask you about the founding of the California Council for the Blind. How did that come about?

Perry: The campaign for the pension showed us we needed more representation throughout the state. Through our propagandizing we naturally had gotten in touch with a great many more blind people than we had before. We thought we'd better have local clubs in different towns and out of that grew the idea of the local organizations getting together to give a statewide expression to the blind of California so that we would be in a better position to influence the legislature.

Mrs. Anna L. Saylor had been appointed Director of the Department of Social Welfare and, like the officials in many states, she planned to form some dummy organizations of the blind. The blind people in Los Angeles formed the Southern California Organization for the Blind and Mrs. Saylor took that over.

In about 1929 a meeting was called in San Francisco. For some reason I couldn't go, but all

my blind friends were there. (Dr. Perry telephoned Ernest Leslie during the interview to refresh his memory on this incident.) Mrs. Saylor came; Mr. Dodd of the Rehabilitation Bureau and his San Francisco assistant, Mr. Ballard, came. Mrs. Quinine of the San Francisco broom shop was there. Mrs. Saylor was simply going to take possession of the meeting. She got up and explained how she, in her position as head of the Department of Social Welfare, could do so much more for the blind than they could do for themselves. She wanted to be made president of the organization they formed, The Northern California Association for the Blind. Dr. Richard French, Superintendent of the School for the Blind, was there with a big bouquet of flowers for the supposed president-to-be.

Everyone listened carefully to what Mrs. Saylor had to say and then they got up and nominated different officers and they didn't nominate her at all. That hurt her feelings a good deal. She was taken completely by surprise. Ernest Leslie became the president.

Baum: Dr. Perry, I read that the California Council was organized in 1934 at Fresno and that the meeting was called by Mrs. Mary Carroll Scott LaFer and Mrs. Kathleen Michael Smale.

Perry: Mrs. Michael was the Superintendent of Aid to the Needy Blind. (Mrs. Rheba Crawford Splivalo had replaced Mrs. Saylor as Director of Social Welfare after Governor Rolph's election.) She planned to be president of our new statewide organization and Mrs. Carroll planned to be secretary. Mrs. Michael was quite a politician. In a patronizing way the ladies suggested we ought to make Mrs. Michael president of the Council because she could do so much more for us. I was very surprised when Mr. William Groshell, an osteopath from Los Angeles, (Groshell passed away in 1956) got up and argued and protested and wouldn't let the thing stop. He wasn't usually a leader or a man to say much, but he led the fight to make the Council a real blind man's club and not a tool of the social welfare ladies. They nominated me for president and I was elected; I don't remember if it was unanimous or not.

All that puzzled Mrs. Michael a lot, but still that lady was always on very good terms with us. I

know every once in a while she'd have some trouble up in Sacramento about some pensioners and she'd often want me to come up and help her. She wasn't as cultured and able a woman as Mrs. Saylor. After Merriam became governor, I went up to talk to him and ask him to keep Mrs. Michael, but he let me know he wasn't going to. He appointed Mrs. E. Clair Overholtzer as Supervisor of Aid to the Needy Blind; she was a nicer lady than Mrs. Michael.

We propagandized around to get an organization started in San Francisco and one in Sacramento and we tried to get one in Los Angeles, but they were a little slow about it. The people down there still don't seem to know what it's all about.

But we organized, got to work on a constitution, got committees and away we went. It's been growing, different clubs are organized in different places and they apply to the Council to take them in as a member. We now have twenty-eight or thirty member clubs. Each member club sends a blind delegate to represent them and these representatives make up the California Council for the Blind.

Baum: One of the Council's first resolutions, Number 4, favored an assembly bill to grant blind persons and their guides reduced fares on streetcars.

Perry: That was a bill I wrote. It's a law now. I have it here. First it forbids any common carrier issuing any free or reduced fares to passengers within the state except to blind residents of California. Then it says, "All blind residents of California may be granted free transportation on all streetcars and may be permitted to travel on all other common carriers within the state for one-half the current fare and when any blind person is accompanied by a guide, the combined fares of such blind person and his guide may be fixed at not to exceed the current fare for an individual."

Baum: When was that passed?

Perry: 1935. An interesting question is whether an airplane is a common carrier as the word is used in the statute. There is a federal interstate provision also which grants reduced rates to blind persons. Did you notice that the word "may" was used instead of "shall"?

Baum: Yes, I did. I had to change the word from "shall" to "may" to get the thing through. I thought if it went through with "may" the people would demand it be permitted. You always have to go to court when it says "may" to find out what it means.

Baum: Didn't you have quite a bit of trouble with the Southern Pacific on that?

Perry: A little, but they finally came around. They now don't bother us. Of course, we can use the federal act, but this is a more liberal act than the federal one if the railroad will recognize it. Under the federal act, you can be made to travel on certain trains and they are apt to sell you a ticket for half-fare, but require that you take a slow train. When people travel, as a rule they are in a hurry. The buses now let us go for reduced fare.

Baum: What was the idea behind this, that the blind have very little money?

Perry: Well, they have very little money, but many of the blind travel with a guide and they have to pay two fares and also pay their guide for his time. So if a blind man is peddling, he is whipped before he's started.

The provision about free streetcar transportation has never been used. The blind do not get free transportation on streetcars, except in San Francisco.

Baum: You mean that the streetcars haven't permitted them to ride free?

Perry: That's right. Well, we haven't tested it out. I've thought once or twice I'd like to have a case and take it to court, but to get a good case some blind man would have to get on the streetcar and when they demanded his fare refuse to pay it, quoting this rule. Then try to get them to put him off the car. If they just scold and quarrel and don't put him off, we haven't got a case. If they put him off, he can sue them for not carrying him on the grounds of this ruling and then the judge will have to decide about that "may." We might get away with it.

There's only one way to find out and that's take it to court and I couldn't find anybody who was willing to take the brunt of the trouble. No one was willing to be put off the car.

Baum: In looking through the Council resolutions, I notice year after year that you had resolutions trying to get the different agencies to employ blind persons to work with blind.

Perry: Yes. We're still at it.

Baum: Did you have much luck?

Perry: They had some luck, yes. We created a bureau of home teachers for the blind who travel around and visit in a certain district, to the homes of the blind people, and try to help adapt themselves, particularly the newly blind, to their new handicap. They used to sort of leave that to some sighted people to do. Now they put blind people on. I believe right now they have a staff of about twenty in different districts throughout the state.

Baum: Twenty blind persons?

Perry: Practically all blind. They help the blind, teach them how to get around by themselves, how to do a great many things that they did before they were blind. It's strange how a newly blind person thinks he can't do certain things when with a little instruction he finds he can go right ahead and do them. That's a good idea.

Baum: For a job like that, a blind person can do better than a sighted person.

Perry: Yes. He can talk to the employers in placement work with more authority. In teaching these people

in their homes, he can go right in and convince them right away by doing what he wants them to do. They say, "If you can do it, I guess I can."

Baum: Was that your main reason for trying to get blind people into these jobs? Because they could work better with other blind people? Or did you think that maybe the public would be willing to see a blind man work with another blind man when he wouldn't employ them in a job with sighted people?

Perry: There are several reasons. One is that they would need that instruction for their living in their own home. A woman suddenly goes blind. Her husband, when he leaves in the morning, shows her to a chair and says, "Now you stay there till I come home. You might fall down the stairs if you walk around." All that kind of thing. Horrible for her to sit and lose hope and be convinced that she can't go to the stove and cook dinner and keep house. Now if a blind person comes in and says, "I'll do the cooking for you and show you how I do it," she's really not teaching the lady anything she doesn't know; the lady has been cooking all her life. But now her husband will come home one day and she won't be

sitting in her chair. She'll have dinner all ready. And it changes the atmosphere of the situation completely. She finds that she can do practically all the things that she did before.

Baum: And you felt it was important that a blind person should teach her this?

Perry: The sighted people wouldn't believe she could do it either. A sighted person wouldn't know how to teach her. The average sighted person would say to a blind person, "Don't go near the stove; don't turn on the gas; don't light a match; you'll burn your hair," and so on. Blind people can go ahead and take care of their homes, but you can't convince them by giving them a lecture.

So particularly for blind women who have to keep house, blind home teachers are a good idea.

Baum: It sounds as if the California Council, and you in particular, has had a great deal to do with California legislation concerning the blind.

Perry: Yes, and that was a bit of a problem for me because I was a state employee. I hesitated a great deal about taking the job because I was afraid all the agencies, the School for the Blind, the welfare

people, would fight me, and they would have, I guess. In a sense they did, but they finally got more afraid of me than I was of them. I got the good will of the people in the legislature, but I was always running a risk. They could have fired me anytime, but they were afraid of the public reaction. They gave me opposition instead of cooperation in the hopes that we would die out in a little while. Instead of that, the legislature cooperated with us very well.

Baum: With the California Council?

Perry: Yes. All those aid laws for the blind were written by the Council, most of them done personally by me. I went up to Sacramento and had the aid bill introduced by Ernest Crowley and we got it through. A. B. 117 in 1929, if I remember correctly.

The people in the administration object to individual people coming up and introducing bills because they want to set the policies. They at any time could have said that I had no business going up to the legislature, that I should be down at the School doing my school work and that I should be

disciplined or fired. But they decided they'd better not.

Baum: You had too many friends?

Perry: They realized that if they had done that, the Council would have gone out with a terrific attack and we would have won. We could have easily shown the blind were in terrible need and nobody was paying any attention to us. Administrators are all timid, you know. They want promotions, increases in salaries.

Baum: How did you go about getting a bill passed?

Perry: You have to get the good will of the legislators, which of course meant that I had to spend a lot of time in Sacramento. I've passed a lot of bills up there, pretty near a hundred of them by this time. Once in a while there's a real genuine argument, but a great deal of it is simply getting their good will and knowing them well enough so you won't call up your bill at the wrong time.

If you have a man introduce your bill who's been in the legislature for some time, he knows all of these legislators and what their leanings are and how they feel about this, that, and the other thing.

So when his bill is called he looks around the room and he says, "I'll request you postpone mine until tomorrow," meaning that a lot of the people he knows are going to vote for him are not present and a lot of the people who won't are present. So he puts it off. Of course, a greenhorn doesn't know that. He doesn't know the man.

So it's a very good idea to get a man who knows his fellow legislators well and he knows when to call it up. By using judgment that way, he can sometimes get a bill that won't have any argument about it at all He introduces it and one, two, three, it goes through.

I had Ernest Crowley, a blind man in the legislature. One of the boys I had in school when I first came had become a lawyer and then he got into the legislature and he was there for twenty-six years, I think. He died a year or so ago. He was a great assistance to me. He was very popular in the legislature and he was very devoted to me. Why, he'd get up when I'd be talking to the legislative committee and say, "That's my old teacher that's talking to you now."

AID TO PARTIALLY SELF-SUPPORTING BLIND

Baum: I know you were largely responsible for the 1941 Aid to Partially Self-Supporting Blind bill. Could you tell me how you got that passed?

Perry: Just like the others. I sat down and wrote the bill, that's all.

Baum: Had you talked this over in the Council?

Perry: No. Oh, I might have with some of them, but at that time the Council was not very strong. They were just sitting back waiting for me to do something. I had introduced the bill a year or so earlier. It was a revolutionary bill.

Baum: Yes, it was.

Perry: There was nothing like it anywhere else. The pension bill, like the old age pension bill, gave the blind some money because they were poor, but no one ever gave any thought to trying to encourage the blind to earn a living. That seems absurd to most people. I wrote this bill to encourage the blind to work themselves off of the pension and become independent.

Baum: How did you get it through? The state didn't get federal aid on those aid payments.

Perry: No, but the number of people who take advantage of the bill is very limited. We have had up to three or four hundred in the state under Chapter Three, Aid to Partially Self-Supporting Blind, at one time, and of course, most of those work themselves off in a little while. I got the legislature to be in favor of Chapter Three. The argument I gave them was that if you don't give these people an opportunity to work themselves into freedom economically, you are going to keep paying this pension for each one's lifetime. If you put them on Chapter Three in from three to fifteen years they will have established themselves and will be off the pension. Under Chapter Three after a person earns over $1,000 a year, which he keeps, he keeps half of what he earns andthe rest is paid back into the state treasury. So everytime he earns a dollar over $1,000, the state is 50¢ better off and he is too. It encourages him more to go on earning. The pension now is $95 a month or $1,140 a year, so when a person earns $3,280, he has paid back his pension entirely.

I remember going up there the last session of the legislature before adjournment, andthe committee held a night session. They were not going to pass the bill and I got excited and got up and made a speech. I don't remember what I said, but the boys can always tell me about it. I gave the legislature an awful stiff talk and they switched and turned it out unanimously. Henri Bindt and Kingsley Price were there. Bindt is always talking about how I had him shedding tears when I made that speech.

I had gotten to be friends with the legislature by that time and it got so they would do almost anything for me.

Baum: But you had a real battle that time?

Perry: Yes, I did because there were two or three men in the Senate who didn't know me very well.

Oh, it is a wonderful law, but I rather think they are going to fight it this year.

Baum: Who is?

Perry: I'll give you an example. Last year the Assembly Interim Committee on Social Welfare had a committee

consultant, Everett W. DuVall, who wanted to do away with Chapter Three. You see, the state gets matching funds from the federal government on Aid to Needy Blind, but not on Chapter Three payments. I told him it would be a terrible mistake. Then the Committee held hearings around the state and I guess they changed their minds and decided Chapter Three was pretty good. DuVall just wrote me that they want to strengthen Chapter Three now.

Baum: How about the Department of Social Welfare? They administer aid payments to the blind.

Perry: Well, I don't think the Welfare Department likes it.

Baum: Do they make it hard for blind people to get onto Aid to Partially Self-Supporting Blind?

Perry: They did when it started and, yes, many do still.

Baum: They'd rather keep them on Aid to Needy Blind?

Perry: Yes. And they have a new regulation too. A year or so ago the Welfare Department declared that a man earning over $1,500 a year would be taken off aid altogether, instead of keeping on with the 50¢ deal.

Baum: Then that would tend to cause a man to earn almost up to $1,500 a year and then quit earning.

Perry: Yes. It tends to discourage him.

Baum: I believe the Aid to Needy Blind pension was raised from $90 to $95 a month this year.

Perry: Yes, but I can't understand their position sometimes.

Take a sighted man who is unemployed; he doesn't just get $90 a month. He gets around $150 a month unemployment compensation. Why wouldn't they assume a blind man gets just as hungry and needs as much as the sighted fellow, who can get employment easier too. Oh, they made a big fuss about raising the aid from $90 to $95 a month last year.

Baum: The Department of Social Welfare?

Perry: Yes, and the legislature too. Of course, they are influenced by the State Department of Finance, which wants to save money. But I should think they would give a blind man more than they give an unemployed sighted man, because the needs of the blind are much greater. A sighted man can do many things for himself and pick up money by little errands for his neighbors, things a blind man can't do as a rule.

As for Chapter Three, that saves money for the state in the long run.

Take ten Broek. He couldn't have gone to college without the pension andthe reader bill, but now he is one of the leading members of the faculty, owns his own home, makes a good deal of money, raises his family very well, and does a tremendous amount of work for the blind also. That's an entirely different picture than the blindman who stands on the street corner trying to sell pencils.

Do you see how Chapter Three saves money?

Baum: Yes, I see that, but I don't see why the Department of Social Welfare doesn't see that.

Perry: They do, but they don't give a darn.

Baum: Is it that they want to save a little this year, even though they have to keep paying it out every year?

Perry: Well, the Welfare is administered by the county governments and the boards of supervisors are elected people who like to brag about saving money for the state so as to get re-elected. Well, it really comes down to the point that they don't think blind people can make much money and it's a waste of time trying all this. And it is very slow when you start out.

But things are changing now; a blind man can get a job. Take Kingsley Price, a very popular and highly respected faculty member at Johns Hopkins. He was never out of a job from the time he graduated. He has been totally blind since he was five or six years old. His parents brought him out here from Colorado after they heard what we were doing about the education of the blind.

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND

Baum: You were speaking about Dr. ten Broek. I know he's president of the National Federation. I was wondering, did you have anything to do with the formation of that? Did the California Council have anything to do with that?

Perry: In a sense; our boys went to the meeting, and of course I propagandized for it and urged it, and so on and was the delegate to it from the Council for many years. But I'm sort of cutting that out a good deal now. Well, I guess I was at the last convention, too. Now we've gotten past the stage where one man has to do everything. We now have some able blind people around who are becoming interested themselves and are willing to give their time and work. Ten Broek is one, but we have others.

Baum: Mr..Archibald is the executive secretary, isn't he?

Perry: Executive director of it.

Baum: Is he one of your boys?

Perry: Yes. And Kenneth Journigan--do you know of him?

Baum: Oh, I did meet him once.

Perry: He's very enthusiastic, a very enthusiastic worker.

Baum: For the Federation?

Bancroft Library

Perry: Yes, he's one the Board of the Federation. But he works for the blind generally. He is a very active member of the Council.

Baum: Did you work on the National Federation business much? Or were you so busy with the California Council?

Perry: Well, I helped them and so forth, but I didn't want to give all my time to that, because it would weaken my work here, you see. My work here hadn't developed to the stage where I would have confidence enough in it to keep on running right without me. I thought I ought to devote my primary efforts here, and in fact it's a better idea, because you get a good law through in one place, you know, and then it's quite easy to duplicate it in another state. For instance, Washington State has our Chapter Three in its law.

Baum: I noticed in the 1940 minutes of the Council that you had given a certain amount of money, $100, to the National Federation from the Council. Do you remember that? I think it was when the Federation was just founded.

Perry: Yes. We wanted to get money to help the Federation. It wasn't '40, was it?

Baum: 1940 was when the Federation was founded.

Perry: Yes, but I don't know when we passed that ruling that we should contribute. We have a "White Cane Week" in which we make a public appeal for money, largely through mailing. Our agreement was that we should send half of what we collected, and we still do it. We spread this idea of the "White Cane" program so that practically all the states took it up and contributed half of what they collected to the Federation. But now the Federation has grown so that while we contribute to them, they carry on this same propaganda every year for collecting money. I think they collected $75,000 last year. So they are quite independent.

It used to be a very serious matter to send a man from the Federation to live in Washington, pay his hotel bills, secretary, and all those things; to propagandize to Congress takes lots of money. In the early days we had to do that and largely we didn't have the money ourselves. Perhaps the man we sent paid a great deal of those expenses himself. It's gotten so now, I think, that we've passed that stage.

Baum: I understand you were sent by the National Federation to investigate the Idaho State School for the Blind

and the Deaf this spring. (1956) Could you tell me a little about that work?

Perry: Yes. There had been many complaints by the parents of both the deaf children and the blind children in the school, and Frank Collins and his wife, of the Gem State Association of the Blind, and Don Pettingill of the Idaho Association of the Deaf, asked the National Federation to send a committee to investigate. Chick ten Broek appointed Mr. Durwood McDaniels, an attorney from Oklahoma City, chairman; Mr. Vernon Williams, an attorney from South Dakota; and myself. We went up there and found a committee from the American Foundation for the Blind already on the scene, composed of three sighted people: the superintendent of the newly established State School for the Deaf in Southern California; the superintendent of the College for the Deaf in Washington, D. C.; and a lady employee of the American Foundation. They looked over the school and issued a report that was more or less of a cover-up and very generous to the school and to the then-superintendent, whom they recommended be kept on since he had served so long.

We thought there would be little value in going to the school, that they would not cooperate, so we talked mainly to alumni and parents of the children in there. The children were learning nothing, the teachers were not as well trained as they had to be in other schools, and they even had two totally deaf teachers to teach the blind children, a ridiculous situation. Some of the better teachers resigned in order to draw public attention to conditions there. The superintendent was a sick man; he couldn't handle the job.

Baum: Were you able to get any changes?

Perry: Not many yet. The State Board of Education was against doing anything and the Governor was embarrassed and said all this agitation was not good for the children. But we stayed on and got a lot of favorable newspaper publicity and we talked to the adult blind there and they can keep working on it. I think the Board of Education finally did publish the American Foundation report and they removed the old superintendent and appointed a new young man who seems competent. They implied they would get some better teachers for the blind.

So the struggle is still going on, but I think things will improve there.

Baum: Did your committee publish a report?

Perry: I don't know if it's written up yet. When it is, it will be turned in to the National Federation office, which is at Dr. ten Broek's home. They have lots of materials there, reports and minutes of the meetings and copies of speeches and all that sort of thing.

CONCLUSION

Baum: Dr. Perry, I'd like to ask you what effect you think the New Deal had on aid to the blind.

Perry: What do you mean by the New Deal?

Baum: I mean Democrats in the federal administration.

Perry: Oh, they've done a good deal for the blind.

Baum: Vocational Rehabilitation came up then for the blind.

Perry: Yes, and the others too. It's a modern idea. It will eventually do a good deal for the blind, I think. You're naturally up against the same thing that the blind are always up against. It's assumed that there isn't anything that you can do for them.

Baum: You think the same thing is true in Vocational Rehabilitation?

Perry: Yes. The sighted people there don't know what blind people can do. When they read these stories about what they can do, they seem impossible to them.

Baum: You got the aid bill in California before the New Deal came in. Then you had a lot of trouble

with the Social Security Administration. I wondered if you might think that things might have been better for the blind if the New Deal hadn't been elected? I mean, do you think they put things backward or forward as far as the blind were concerned?

Perry: They progressed. World's going to progress. I don't care whether you put Republicans or Democrats in, eventually they're going to progress. They're going to progress for the blind people slower because people don't understand them. The pension is the only good idea they've come up with.

Things are better than they were. When I was a kid, I knew of one blind man who had a job; I didn't know of any others. Now loads of my former pupils are making a living.

Baum: Are you a Republican?

Perry: I have no particular feelings. I really don't know the difference between a Republican and a Democrat. I can't tell them apart. Except to take their word. I think our country unfortunately--we're not divided into different philosophies. If you talk to a Republican now, he gives you the same

song and dance that a Democrat gives you. So far as I can see, the country is divided into two kinds of people. Some people have a job and some people don't. I don't know why. Of course, they can't give jobs to all of them.

I was raised as a Republican, and everyone who knows me around here says I'm a Republican. They say I'm an autocrat in everything except towards the blind, and for the blind, I'm a Socialist or something. People laugh about it. Think it's quite a joke. I never can see that there is anything to that criticism.

Of course, my aim in life has always been to create opportunities for the blind, opportunities for becoming self-supporting and independent.

Baum: You think that is the key to everything?

Perry: Well, that's the key to the important things.

Baum: And you think college education is the best way for a blind person to fit himself for a job?

Perry: Oh yes. He's at less of a disadvantage. He can talk, he can communicate.

Now, when it comes to thinking, a blind man can think just as well as the other fellow. So if

blind people will educate themselves, they have opportunities to work. They have difficulty in getting appointments, but that's temporary. I think that will pass eventually.

Baum: I imagine Miss Holt said that a lot of blind people don't have the ability to go to college, so handwork is better.

Perry: That's true, and you have to try to do something else with them. Try to do what you can. I think a great many of them have the ability to go to college though that don't go because they don't see their way clear to do it. They've assumed from their early life that they couldn't do these things and they don't even try them.

Baum: Someone told me that you had said that most of the work you did for the blind was not a part of your job, that you thought the most important things you did were things you weren't supposed to be doing.

Perry: Well, that's true.

Baum: What do you think was your most important work?

Perry: Oh, my most important work was my dragging the blind out of their sleep, stirring them up, putting some ambition into them, and then helping them. To say "go to college," they couldn't without money or readers. The thought of going to the

legislature for money for readers sounded ridiculous to them. None of the schools had men who were revolutionary at all; they weren't big enough men.

Baum: Well, Dr. Perry, which would you think was the more important of your works, seeing that the blind student could go to college or organizing the blind into groups?

Perry: Oh, I think sending them to college was perhaps the most important thing I've done.

Baum: Why?

Perry: Because it puts a boy into a position where he believes that he can do things and so he goes out and becomes somebody.

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Transcribers: WB & KW
Typist: KW

[Dr Perry died in Feb. 1961]